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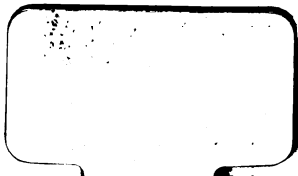
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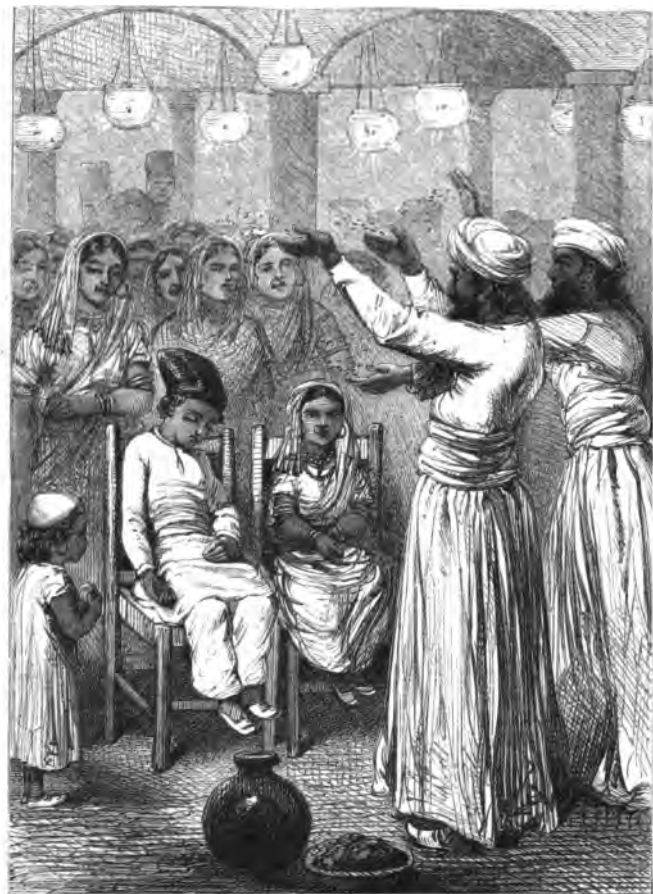


ALMERIA'S CASTLE;

OR,

MY EARLY LIFE IN INDIA AND IN ENGLAND.

LONDON :
GILBERT AND RIVINGTON, PRINTERS,
ST. JOHN'S SQUARE.



The Parsi Wedding—The Boy Bridegroom falls asleep.

ALMERIA'S CASTLE;

OR,

MY EARLY LIFE IN INDIA AND IN ENGLAND.

BY

HENRIETTA LUSHINGTON,

AUTHOR OF "HACCO THE DWARF," "THE HAPPY HOME," &c.



"Sorrow may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."

With Twelve Illustrations.

LONDON:

GRIFFITH AND FARRAN,

SUCCESSORS TO NEWBERRY AND HARRIS,

CORNER OF ST. PAUL'S CHURCHYARD.

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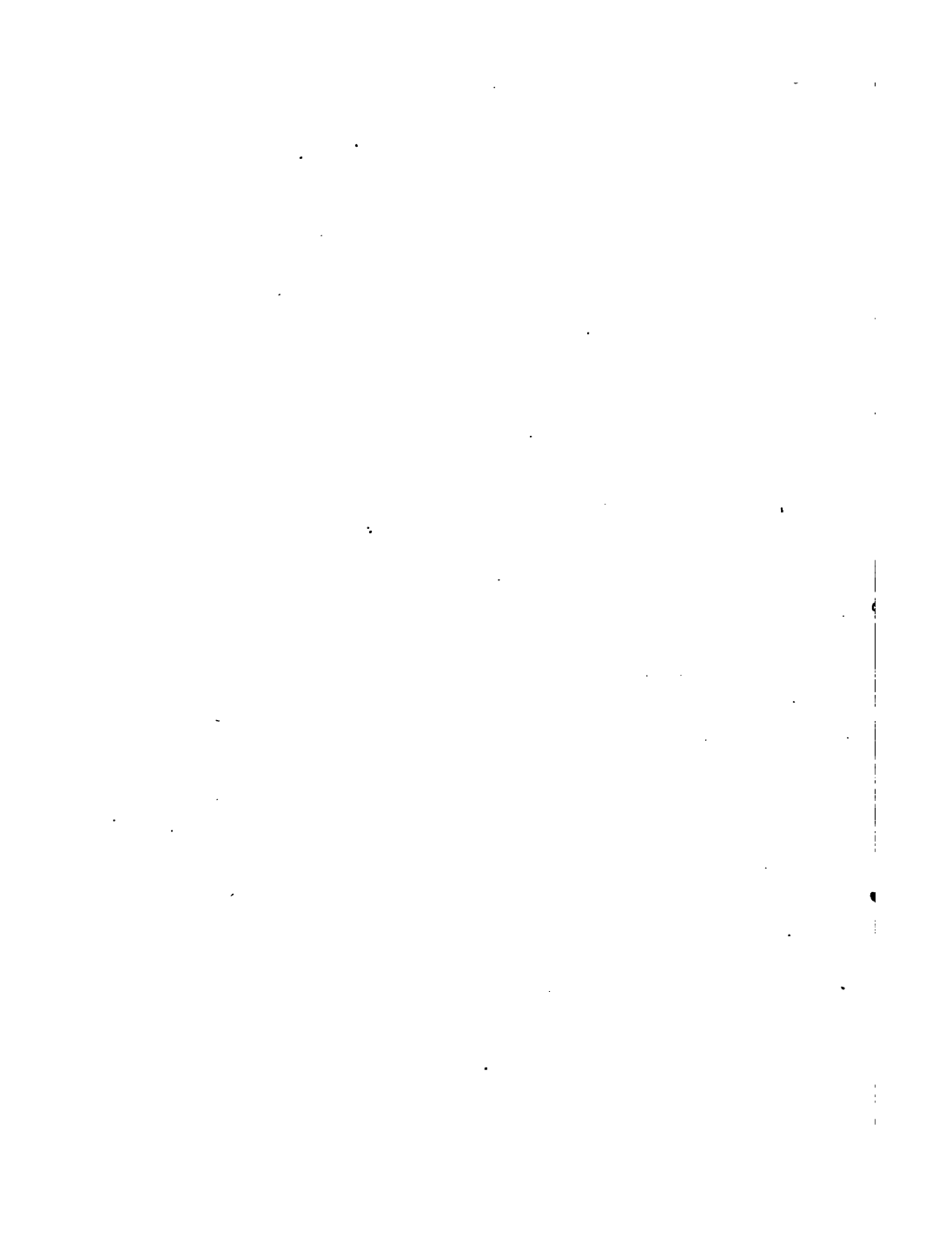


Dedicated

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ETTA AND AGNES.



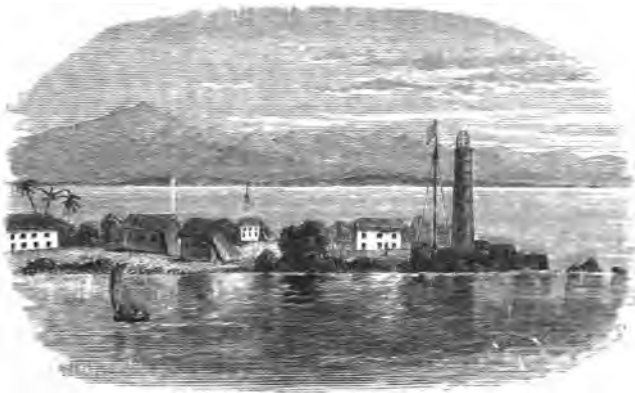


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CHAPTER I.

COLABA.

YOU are always asking for more stories, children: why should I not write out for you some recollections of my own early life, which, though not very eventful, was yet very unlike your bright and happy childhood? If I amuse you, well and good. If I weary you, I will burn the manuscript, and there will be no harm done.

The first scene that I can recollect with any distinctness, as I look back through the long vista of past years, occurred when I must have been about seven years old. My home was then in Colaba, a long narrow islet, joined to the island of Bombay by a causeway at

1. The first part of the document is a list of names and their corresponding addresses. The names are listed in a single column, and the addresses are listed in a single column to the right of the names. The names are: John Doe, Jane Doe, and John Doe. The addresses are: 123 Main St, 456 Main St, and 789 Main St.

2.

3.

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5.

man, whom even tropical heat could not render languid; and she was half servant, half companion to my poor sickly mother, making herself useful in return for her board, for I don't think she received any salary. My mother was always ill, and my father went every morning into the Fort to his business, which kept him away all day, so I hardly know what would have become of us without Mrs. Armstrong, though her busy ways and strict notions often fretted a spoilt child such as I was then. It was my father who spoiled me. In the early morning I went out with him on the rocks below the lighthouse; we breakfasted together, he listening the while to my childish prattle, and defending me from the lectures of Mrs. Armstrong, who came in and out to fetch my mother's tea. Almost every day I could have cried, as I watched him carried away in a hired palkee towards the Fort; and my greatest daily joy was to see him return in the evening. I sat beside him at dinner, and shared his meal, in spite of Mrs. Armstrong's opposition; and in the cool of the evening we strolled out together on the rocks, or as far as the great landing-place, or on the grassy esplanade. As far back as I can remember, my poor mother was always ill, and Mrs. Armstrong kept me out of the way, lest I should disturb her; so I had to find my own amusements all the day. I had no toys,

except a few leaden figures that our younger servant had moulded for me, and a waxen baby which my father had brought me one happy day, and which, in spite of its jaundiced complexion, I believed to be a model of beauty. Now and then I was allowed to creep on tip-toe to my mother's bedside and kiss her poor pale face, or exchange a few whispered words with her; but most part of the day I passed alone.

Such was the state of things at the time which I recollect with some degree of clearness; and the events of one night especially come back to me, as if they had occurred but yesterday. My mother was worse than usual, and Mrs. Armstrong, after undressing me and putting me into my little bed, with the mosquito-net carefully tucked in all round it, returned to my mother's room to sit up all night. My father was writing in the sitting-room. He had been grave and silent all the evening, and I had heard him say he should not go to bed. The house was very still, and as I lay awake, I heard my father at long intervals creep to the sick-room, and then return to his task. I could not sleep: I grew more and more restless and nervous, till at last I sat up in the bed and looked about me. There was a dim light from a tumbler within which a wick floated in cocoa-nut oil, in a distant corner of the large room. The sea-breeze stealing in through the

closed jalousies, shook the white drapery above Mrs. Armstrong's bed, till I almost fancied some living thing was there. I looked up to the great beams of the roof, and round on the rude plastered walls, and down on the matted floor. Now and then bats flitted in and out, silent and rapid as thought; and here and there a musk-rat would creep out of his hole, and glide along close to the wainscot. These were sights to which I was well accustomed, but on this night I was strangely nervous. I watched one, two, three, four rats stealing about the room, and I thought of a story my father had been telling me: how the lower part of the house belonged to Bandicoot, the Rat-King, who wore a gold crown, and held his court in a room on the ground-floor; and how every rat in the house (and there were myriads) was obliged to appear nightly before the king and make his salaam.

The story had amused me very much as I sat on my father's knee after dinner, and I had clapped my hands at every fresh rat that appeared, and shouted, "There's another of King Bandicoot's men, papa!" But I did not like it so well now in my loneliness, and the thought of King Bandicoot filled me with foolish terror. Now and then, too, I heard old Ali muttering in his sleep in the verandah below my windows, and this was a sound that always alarmed me; so that it needed only

the flapping of a door in a fresher gust of the sea-breeze to make me utter a loud scream, that brought Mrs. Armstrong at once to my bedside, full of ire.

"What in the world is the matter, Miss Clarissa?" she said. "How can you be so unfeeling as to frighten your poor mamma in this nonsensical fashion? There, lie down, do, and go to sleep, and let us have no more noise."

It was not pleasant to be scolded, but it would be still less so to be left alone again with my terrors, so I went on crying quietly, still sitting up in my bed. Presently another voice spoke—

"Never mind, Mrs. Armstrong, don't scold her," said my father. "If you will go back to Mrs. Grantham, I will take charge of this naughty child, and see that she makes no further disturbance." Mrs. Armstrong stood still yet a few moments to remonstrate, but the mosquito-net was already flung aside, and I was in my father's arms, clinging to his neck, with my cheek resting on his, and feeling as if I could defy the whole world. It was but a waste of words to interfere now, so the good woman walked away, and my father sat down on a chair beside the bed.

"What are we to do now, Clary?" he said. "It really is a very unreasonable hour for you to be awake, and I should like to know what made you squeal like a little sick cat. Just tell me what was the matter, won't

you? Whisper it into my ear, and I won't tell Mrs. Armstrong."

It was not easy to put my trouble into words, but, after a little further persuasion, I managed to say,—“I was frightened . . . and there was a noise . . . and I thought . . . I thought it was King Bandicoot coming in.”

“King Bandicoot!” laughed my father; “why, Clary, I never thought you could be such a little goose! We'll set a trap to-morrow and catch King Bandicoot, and you'll see that he is nothing but a large grey rat. I must never tell you any more stories, if you are to be such a silly little girl.”

“I knew it was all a story,” I said, hanging my head, “but I couldn't help being frightened.”

“Well, you're not afraid now, at any rate,” he said; “do you think you can go to sleep?”

“Oh no, no!” I cried, clinging still more closely to his neck; “I am not sleepy. I can't go to sleep.”

“What am I to do with you then, Clary, you very troublesome little girl? I was just going to cool myself on the rocks, and now here I am with a clog round my neck.”

“Take me too,” I said eagerly; “take me out with you, dear, darling papa!”

“That's not a bad thought, Clary,” he said, as he rose and wrapped the light coverlet from the bed round

me; "we will go out together; but what will Mrs. Armstrong say to us?"

"I don't care for Mrs. Armstrong," I said boldly; "I only care for you, good papa, kind papa."

He laughed as he kissed me; and then we set forth. First we looked into the sick-room, and saw my mother's white face as she lay dozing quietly, with her watcher, (grave and disapproving at sight of me,) seated beside her; then we passed down the creaking stairs, and out from the close, darkened house into the full blaze of tropical moonlight. We were soon settled on the rocks below the lighthouse, silently enjoying the welcome freshness of the breeze and the stillness that was only broken by the soft wash of the waves on the shore. I grew tired of silence at last, and ventured to disturb the thoughtful mood that had crept over my father.

"Why do you look so at the moon, papa?" I said; "what are you thinking about? Please talk to me."

"I beg your pardon, Clary," he said with a smile, as he turned his looks to me; "I had almost forgotten you were here. Do you want to know what I was thinking about? I'll tell you. I was thinking how the moon, that very same moon you and I see there, used once upon a time to shine into a chamber in a beautiful castle far away; and I was wondering what the moon would see if she were to peep into that chamber now."

"Tell me about it, please," I pleaded, for I dearly loved a story; "whose chamber was it? what was it like?"

"It was unlike any room that you have ever seen, Clary. There were rich flowered curtains hanging at the window, and on the floor was a carpet so thick and soft that no tread could be heard upon it. Against the wall stood a little bed with snow-white drapery falling down to the crimson carpet; and in this bed, night after night, slept a little boy, whose delight it was on moonlight evenings to have the curtains drawn back, that he might, as he lay in bed, watch the moon riding up the sky, and see the bright colours of the coat-of-arms on the window-panes, reflected in paler tints on his white bed. No rats, or bats, or Bandicoots came to disturb him. Shall I tell you what used to come, Clary?"

"Yes, do, papa," I said eagerly.

"At a certain hour every night, though the boy was not always awake to see, the door of his room was softly opened, and some one came in and stood at his bedside. It was a strange little figure, not larger than a child of twelve or thirteen years, but its face was not young, and certainly not handsome. The nose was very long, the eyes were very small, but the mouth could sometimes smile graciously and sweetly. The dress this figure wore was always black, and on its head was a sort

of cap made of black velvet, and bordered with fur, below which were seen short black curls of very glossy hair. With a pair of very small, very white hands, this strange figure would smoothe the boy's pillow or arrange his bedclothes; but, even if he were awake, he dared not speak a word of thanks, because he knew he should be blamed for not being asleep. In a few minutes the figure glided away as silently as it had come."

"Who was it, papa? what was it?"

"It was the Fairy-Princess to whom the castle belonged. The boy had no father or mother, and this fairy had taken him to live in her castle. She was very kind to him in many ways. She gave him a black pony with a white star on its forehead, and she rode with him, teaching him to leap over hedges and ditches, till he was as fearless as herself. She used to ride a tall white horse, and she wore a long black skirt, and a velvet cap, so that wherever she went people knew it was the Fairy-Princess. Her castle stood on a hill, with old trees scattered singly or in groups on its green slopes; and below the hill was a lake where swans floated to and fro, and made nests among the reeds. The fairy loved to row herself about the lake in a pretty green boat; or sometimes she would spread a sail, and glide from shore to shore. She would take the boy with her in the long summer days, and teach

him to catch fish with nets in the lake; or wander away by a trout-stream below the hill, and give him a lesson in managing a rod and line. She taught him to shoot at a mark, too; and in winter she made him skate with her, as she flew over the ice like a fairy as she was. All these open-air exercises made the boy grow tall and strong, so that at twelve years old he was bigger than the fairy herself."

"What was the fairy's name, papa?" I asked.

"Her name was Almeria," he replied, after a moment's hesitation.

"Almeria!" I repeated in surprise. "Why, papa, I am named Clarissa Almeria. Was I called Almeria after the fairy?"

"Never mind, Clary," my father said, speaking hurriedly; "that does not come into our story. Let us go back to that. Where was I?"

"You did not tell me what the castle was like where the fairy lived," I remarked.

"I could hardly tell you that, Clary, for you have never seen any thing like it, and your poor little head could hardly imagine such a large, grand abode. It was not a bit like the poor tumble-down place, all alive with rats, where you and I live. The great arched door opened into a hall with carved ceiling, and beyond this were rooms adorned with mirrors, and gilded

furniture, and damask hangings, where the fairy sometimes entertained guests. It was a fine sight to see the castle lighted up on those occasions. The windows were all ablaze, so that people knew for miles round that the fairy was feasting her friends; and the reflected brightness on the lake frightened the swans and made them hide away among the reeds. On these occasions the fairy still wore a black robe, but it was of the richest velvet; and, instead of fur round her velvet cap, there was a border of splendid diamonds, and her little white hands were almost hidden with glittering rings. She did the honours gracefully, as a fairy should do them, and her smile of welcome was unspeakably gracious and winning."

"What did the boy do, papa?" I inquired.

"The boy sat on her right hand at table," replied my father, "and ate dainties off a golden plate like the rest. Fresh fruits and dried fruits, heaped in dishes of cut crystal supported on golden stands, were placed on the board, interspersed with vases of choice flowers; and over all shone a thousand lights. The gay dresses of the ladies, their silvery laughter, and the buzz of gay conversation, delighted the boy, and he remembered those feasts for many a long day afterwards. He was not older than you, Clary, when he was first allowed to sit at the board, on the fairy's right hand. What

would Mrs. Armstrong have said to such doings? Before that time, he used to lie awake in his little bed, listening to the unusual sounds, or watching the reflection of his coloured window creep along the wall till it fell on his coverlet. By and by the wheels of the departing guests would roll away down the hill, and presently the door of the boy's room was opened softly, and the fairy would glide to his bedside, and stand a moment there, with her diamonds flashing and sparkling like stars, and then she passed away as silently as she had come. But the fairy did not go to rest then, late as was the hour. I have not told you, Clary, of the greatest of all the gifts that this strange being possessed. She was such a musician as I suppose only a fairy can be. In that little body there dwelt a voice so rich and sweet, that, when she chose to exert it, the largest of her noble rooms was filled with the exquisite sounds. Those hands, that looked so small and feeble, could move with such cunning and power over the keys, that they melted the heart to softness or thrilled it with delight at the fairy's will. But she seldom exercised her great power by day. It was at night, when all was still in the castle, that she loved to repair to the organ-gallery above the great hall, and play her weird music, till the sound rolled through the long passages in great floods of harmony. After any of her

feasts, she was sure to do this; and one night, when the boy was a very little child, the music stirred him with such strong force, that he rose from his bed, and crept barefooted to the opening of the gallery, whence he could see without being seen. The great lamps had all been extinguished, and only a pair of wax lights twinkled faintly close to the keys of the organ. But the moonlight floated in through the tall uncurtained windows, mapping the panes on the marble floor, and making the hall seem of vast proportions. The fairy stood at the organ, moving the bellows with her tiny foot, as she played full rich chords, now and then singing a few words in a voice that swelled with unearthly sweetness above the accompaniment. It was a strange scene, Clary; the fairy, with her eyes glittering almost as brightly as her diamonds, singing her wonderful music in that shadowy hall. The boy stole back to his bed at last, trembling with excitement rather than with cold."

"Is the fairy Almeria alive now, papa?" I asked, after a pause. "Shall I see her when we go to England?"

"Never, I think, Clary," replied my father. "The fairy Almeria still lives in her castle, but she must be old now, if fairies can ever grow old, and I don't think you will ever see her."

"And the boy," I continued, "what became of the boy? Does he live with her now?"

"No, Clary, he has not seen her for years. The boy was sent to school and to college, always passing his vacations at Almeria's castle; and in due time he grew to be a man. And then, Clary, and then—there happened a sad quarrel between the fairy and her quondam darling, and she told him she would never see his face again."

"Oh! papa, do tell me how it was!" I cried. "Why did they quarrel? What did the boy do?"

"Clary," replied my father, "I think I have remarked to you more than once, that you have a trick of asking two or three questions in a breath. Mrs. Armstrong has made the same remark."

"Oh yes, papa, I know, I know; but please don't talk about that now, when I want so much to hear about the boy. Why did he quarrel with that wonderful fairy?"

"I hardly know how to explain it to you, Clary," my father said. "Both parties had very strong wills. The fairy thought he ought to obey her in all things; and the boy, when he became a man, thought she ought not to dictate; and at last he committed an act of disobedience that she could not forgive, and so they parted."

"But *what* did he do?" I persisted. "Was it very wrong, papa?"

"(Two questions again, Clary!) This was how it happened: the fairy said, 'You must do my bidding in all things:' and one day she took him into a garden full of brilliant flowers, and bade him choose which he would have for his very own. But he thought them all too gay and garish, and he turned boldly to the fairy, and said, 'No, I will have none of these that flaunt in the sunshine. I will have a wild white lily, that grows out of sight in the wood.' He had his way, Clary. He gathered the white lily and carried it proudly in his hand; and when the fairy saw him, her eyes flashed with anger and scorn, and she told him her castle should never again be a home for him, and that she would never more see his face so long as she lived. He was angry too, and so they parted."

"And all for a flower, papa!" I exclaimed. "What a pity! Where did the poor boy go then?"

"He took his lily in his hand, Clary, and sailed away over the sea; and his flower drooped, and his life was sad, and the fairy and her castle seemed to him 'like as a dream when one awaketh.'"

"Oh, papa," I cried, for I had entered heart and soul into the story, and believed every word, "couldn't he go back, and ask her to love him again?"

"No, Clary, that could never be," he replied, in a strangely solemn voice, "never, never! But, Clary," he continued, with a sudden change of tone, "you and I must go back to our home, or we shall be good for nothing to-morrow. I feel the land-wind beginning to blow, and if it makes you ill, what will Mrs. Armstrong say?"

We took a last look at the moon, the rippling water, and the tall lighthouse, and then my father carried me into the house, laid me on my bed, tucked in the mosquito-net as carefully as Mrs. Armstrong could have done it, and sat by my bedside till I fell asleep. My dreams that night were full of the fairy Almeria, who thenceforth was the theme of many of my father's stories. I believed every word. It was all unlike my daily experience, but then it happened in England, that land of wonder over the sea, where marvellous things must of necessity occur. England was fairy-land to me.

Meantime the days passed on, bringing little change in my mother's state; and my father was more occupied than ever. It was now the early part of the cool season, and the mornings and evenings were delightful. The strolls at day-dawn with my father were prolonged till the sun rose above the sea-mists, and the distant mountains on the mainland glowed like living ame-

thysts in the early light. But more sadly than ever did I watch the palanquin leave the door after breakfast, knowing what a long, lonely day was before me; for my father seldom returned till night had fallen, and I was allowed to be in my mother's room for only a few minutes at a time, at long intervals. About five o'clock in the afternoon, when, as Mrs. Armstrong used to say, "the poison was gone out of the sun," I usually took my yellow doll on my arm, and went out to sit in the shadow of the lighthouse. In England a child, even so lonely as I was, would have found something to play with, or would have clambered over the rocks, and found pleasure in every difficulty encountered and overcome; but I was a poor languid little Anglo-Indian, so I only sought a seat on the rocks, and was content to watch the fishing-boats sweeping over the water, and the pleasure-yachts, whose white sails caught the evening breeze; or sometimes a stately merchantman with all her canvas spread, or steamer with long trail of smoke behind her, passing into the harbour. Reading was as yet an unknown pleasure to me. My father called me a dunce, for, with all his efforts to teach me, I only knew a few of my letters. However, I thought over all his stories, and indulged in many a dream of the fairy Almeria and all the other wonders of England.

One evening I was sitting in my usual place below the lighthouse, when some one stopped near me and said, in a loud cheerful voice,

“Well, little woman, here you are again, all alone and quiet as a mouse! I often see you sitting here. Are you Mr. Grantham’s little daughter?”

I looked up and saw that the speaker was a tall man wearing some kind of uniform, and a pith hat that shaded his sun-burnt face, and kind, blue, English eyes. I had often seen him before, and knew that he was the officer who had charge of the lighthouse.

“Yes,” I replied, “I am Clarissa Almeria Grantham” (for I had become very proud of my second name, since hearing of the fairy and her castle).

“It is very lonely and dull for you here,” continued my new acquaintance. “Do you like looking at the boats?” and when I answered in the affirmative, he continued,

“Would you like to come up to the top of the lighthouse with me? I am going there now, and you can get a better view of the harbour a good deal, than you do down here.”

I rose and followed him up some two hundred steps, and reached the great lantern almost breathless.

“So, so, my little maid,” said my conductor, patting me on the shoulder; “I am afraid I made you come up

too fast. Rest a minute before you begin to look about you."

I did feel confused, and looking down from that great height made my head swim, so I turned to the inside of the great lantern, and saw a man trimming the lamps. I had thought the officer's face very much sun-burnt, but it was pale beside this sailor's. I looked up at him almost with fear, he was so strikingly ugly. He had but one eye, his nose was broad and flat, and his mouth seemed puckered up into a perpetual whistle. He went on silently with his work for some time, while the officer was looking out to sea with his glass. Presently, in the course of his employment, the sailor came close to the place where I sat, and, suddenly turning to me with a merry twinkle in his solitary eye, said, "Well, little missy, and do ye think you ever saw such a beauty as Tom Stubbs before? You've been looking at him a long time."

"I beg your pardon," I said, in much confusion.

"Oh! no offence, missy, no offence," he answered, laughing; "I'm quite used to it. But come, it isn't time to light up just yet: wouldn't ye like to look about ye a bit?"

At this moment the officer, whom Stubbs called Captain Scott, laid down his glass, and, after speaking a few words to Stubbs about some vessel that

was coming in, laid his hand kindly on my shoulder, and said,

"I must be going, little maid. Would you like to stay up here for a little while with old Tom? It's fresher than down below, and I'll call and tell them at home where to find you when they want you."

I agreed to stay, though feeling a little shy of my strange companion; and Captain Scott ran down the spiral stairs. I suppose my looks betrayed my feelings, for Stubbs addressed me in a voice he endeavoured to soften till it was little more than a hoarse whisper.

"Never fear old Tom, missy. He'll be as gentle with you as if you was a chayney tea-cup, that musn't be touched hardly for fear it should crack. Won't ye like to look out? You wouldn't see a finer look-out place than this in any part of the world."

I went close to the iron rail that surrounded the top of the tower, but again my head swam, and I closed my eyes for a minute.

"You'll get used to it presently," continued old Tom, kindly. "Lay your pretty little soft fingers in my hand, missy, and you'll feel more confidence. Why, it trembles like a little bird, I do declare," he added, as I clasped his horny palm. "Never fear; it'll all be over presently, and you won't be giddy, no more than I am."

He was right. The giddiness soon passed off, and I enjoyed looking round me from my elevated position, while Tom pointed out favourite spots in the scenery so familiar to his eyes. There was Malabar Hill, with black rocks cropping out of palm woods; and Back Bay, on whose shore I could just distinguish first the fishermen drawing in their large nets, and then black figures with glancing lights under the trees that grew close to the water, and at last flaming piles that burnt more brightly as darkness fell, and sent long streaks of light flickering over the waves. On the other side, beyond the harbour, with its scattered islands, I saw the far-off chain of the Western Ghauts, with varied peaks standing out against the sky. Before I was tired of looking, Tom Stubbs had lighted the great lantern, to flash out its warnings to the ships at sea, and the heat ere long obliged me to decamp from its neighbourhood.

"Come again, missy, as often as you like," Tom said, as I prepared to leave him. "It's lonesome for you down below there, and I'll be as tender with ye as any old hen with her downy chick. It's a treat to me to see a little one—of my own colour, I was going to say," he added, laughing, "but your little white face an't much the colour of old Tom's, missy. Any ways, I like to hear your pretty tongue talking so as I can

understand what you say, instead of the heathen lingo most of the children talk hereabouts. Bring your papa up here, missy, and we'll show him it's all safe and pleasant in old Tom's nest."

I went home much pleased with my new acquaintance, whom I described to my father as we sat at dinner together. The next morning I mounted the stairs again, followed by my father, and we found Tom polishing his spy-glass and whistling cheerfully. The old sailor touched his hat and welcomed us cordially, and my father thanked him for his kindness to me on the previous day. It was a glorious sight to see the sun rise over the Ghauts, the golden mists floating away from earth and sea; and the young day was delightfully fresh and cool. I thought I should never be tired of watching the boats come and go, and old Tom had already contrived a seat for me whence I could see the whole harbour, with its many masts, and its white sails flitting to and fro.



CHAPTER II.

THE LIGHTHOUSE.

I SUPPOSE my father was pleased with Tom Stubbs, for I was allowed to go to the lighthouse as often as I liked during the remainder of our stay at Colaba, and I grew very fond of the old sailor; while he, on his side, was glad of the company of even a little child, who listened to his long yarns with wonder and undoubting faith. He had tales to tell me of wonderful adventures by land and sea, and I have reason to think they lost nothing in the telling. One day I mentioned to him that Mrs. Scott, who occasionally noticed me, had taken me for a drive on the previous evening. "Oh! Tom," I continued, "I saw such a strange sight! They were unloading a vessel from America, a vessel full of ice. We stopped at the end of the Apollo Bunder, and watched the men carrying it up to the ice-

house. They had great large lumps, as much as ever they could carry, on their backs ; and the water dripped all over their bodies, and all along the road as they walked. Mrs. Scott said it came from a very cold country. Why should the cold make the water hard like stone ? ”

“ Well, I can’t say, missy, I am sure,” replied Tom, “ but it certainly do. What should you say, missy, if I told you of lumps of that clear shining stuff, such as you saw on them ignorant natives’ backs, as big as mountains floating along the sea ? I’ve seen ’em all sizes and all shapes, some with spires and points like any church, some like cliffs with cascades of bright water flowing down their sides. Ay ! I’ve seen from sixty to a hundred great ice-islands all at once, missy, and a grand sight it was, as ever you’d wish to see.”

It was quite refreshing to think of such things with the thermometer at 80° ; and Tom, seeing that I listened with interest, pursued his reminiscences.

“ There’s a many strange things I’ve seen and done in my time, missy, before I came to be *stooed* in this place. Once upon a time—have ye any objection to the smell of baccy, missy ? ”

I replied in the negative, so he lighted his pipe, leant against the railing with his arms folded, and settled himself for a yarn.

"Once upon a time I was mate of a fishing-schooner that was hired for a yacht by a foreign gent at St. John's, Newfoundland, to go to the Coast of Labrador. There was the captain and me, and three hands, and we made a fair passage, touching at St. George's Bay, and going through the Straits of Belleisle. It seemed a puzzle to us what the Mounseer wanted to go to those latitudes for, but we soon found out he was what they call a naturalist, missy, and he wanted to collect specimens of birds, and beasts, and fishes, to send home to his own country. So we hung about the coast, and fished up queer creatures from the sea; and some he corked up in bottles, and some he skinned, and some he made skeletons of; and then he went ashore and shot birds with an air-gun, and brought them off and stuffed them, and the same with any vermin or insects he came across, till his cabin was like a Noah's ark, only a dead one. There was hardly room for him to lie down in his own berth, but he didn't seem to mind. If he caught a fly of a sort he hadn't seen before, you'd ha' thought he'd found a gold-mine. Sometimes I landed with him in lonely places where 'twas as much as we could do to force our way through the low bushes of fir that matted their boughs together, and sent out a pleasant smell when the sun was shining out warm. Sometimes we came to open places where the grass was

thin and long, and little plants grew, all covered with berries that were very good eating. Glad enough I was to find 'em sometimes, for Mounseer never seemed to get hungry, and he was apt to forget other people's appetites altogether. He liked poking down by the ponds and streams, and I didn't, for there was mosquitoes there as thick and fierce as I ever saw them here, missy. All this time we had to keep a good lookout aboard the yacht, for great ice-islands came floating down from the north, and any one of 'em might have swamped our poor little vessel. Now I'll tell ye a funny thing that happened to me, missy, about one of them big icebergs. It was about the biggest I had ever seen, with two hills in the middle and a flat space all round, just a little bit higher than the water; and the whole thing grounded a little way from the land, while we were at anchor for a day or two. Mounseer was ashore with one of the hands, skinning a big fish, and we on board had nothing to do; so at last I began to think I should like to go aboard the iceberg and see what it was like, and I spoke about it to the captain. He laughed, and said, 'Joe's just going with the boat to bring Mounseer off: you'd better let him drop you on the berg as he goes, and pick you up as he comes aboard again.' 'All right,' said I, and I jumped into the boat and made Joe row me to a low

point, where I scrambled up easier than I expected, for the ice was crusted over with frozen snow, and there was something for the feet and hands to hold to. I waved my hat to the captain, who was still on deck, and he waved his to me; and away went Joe, leaving me there. He laughed as he went, and dared me to go round the berg, and I shouted out that I would go long before he came back. I was right there, missy.

"It was a lovely afternoon. There were a few white, woolly clouds in the sky, and just a ripple over the water, and here and there a great lump of an iceberg, glistening like pearls and diamonds, sailing down to the south. The little schooner lay at anchor, and not another vessel was to be seen far or near. The low shore looked green and pleasant where it sloped down to an inlet, with fir-woods feathering to the water's edge. Joe went in through the inlet, for it opened out into a lake after a bit, and Mounseer was at the farther end. I heard afterwards that Joe didn't find Mounseer willing to come aboard, for his job was only half finished, so he called Joe to come and help him; and they tied the boat up, and worked away for a couple of hours, forgetting all about poor me. As to the captain, he went and took a nap in his berth, and the look-out man thought I was ashore with the others.

"Meantime I began my scramble, and I found it the

hardest work I'd ever tried. Smooth and shining as it looked a little way off, the way round the edge of the berg was full of holes and sharp edges that cut one's feet like knives, with here and there a deep bed of snow where I sank up to my waist and had a hard matter to struggle out again. Well, missy, for two hours the captain slept; for two hours Mounseer skinned his fish; and for two hours I floundered along upon the iceberg, and didn't get more than half of the way round it. Luckily for me, I'd brought a pole with an iron spike to it out of Mounseer's cabin, else I should many a time have stuck fast by the way. As I was saying, for two hours I toiled on, and then I stopped to take breath and look about me. It was about six when we left the schooner, and now it was past eight and the sun was very low. I couldn't see him at all by this time, for I had got round to the eastward of the ice-island, and the two great peaks were between me and the sunset, and a great elbow of the nighest hill hid the schooner from me, so I felt uncommon lonely. What should I see, to make all better, but great clouds of white fog rolling in from the sea. The wind had come round to the eastward, blowing strong, and I knew what the heavy line meant. Nearer and nearer it came, till I couldn't see the sky, or the sea, or the ice-hills, or my own hand a'most, for the thick, white, clinging fog.

I'm not a one easy to frighten, missy, but my heart seemed to go down into my shoes then, and I gave myself up for lost. I didn't dare move more than just a foot or two, for fear of toppling over into the water, and yet I got deadly cold if I stood still; so I just poked about in front of me with my stick, to make sure of a footing, and then moved onwards. I was very tired and sleepy, but I wouldn't give way. There was an old mother at home in those days, missy,—ay, and a bright little girl too,—to look out for old Tom; and I thought of them, and knew they'd put my name into their prayers, and perhaps were doing it at that very minute; so I took heart and went on. Two hours more passed away, only two hours, and they seemed like months to me; and then, all on a sudden, like lifting up a veil, the fog went away, and there was the great, round, blessed moon shining out in the sky without a cloud. The tall peaks of ice glittered and glistened till I could hardly bear to look at them, but I could see my footing now, so I moved on as briskly as I could, to get a view of the schooner, for I felt sure the captain would send a boat for me soon. Just as I came in sight of the vessel, I fancied I heard a noise somewhere near, and presently something seemed to move in the shadow close under the hill. 'It's Joe, God bless him! a-looking for me,' thinks I; and I put

my hand to my mouth, and shouted out that there I was, all safe and sound ; and then I scrambled on again. But no answer came to my shout, which seemed strange ; and when I got about forty yards from the place where I'd seen something move, there it was again, coming out from the shadow of the hill into the bright moonlight. Just think how I felt, missy, when I saw, instead of Joe, a great white bear stepping softly over the ice, with his great head swaying, like this, from side to side, as he walked. I hadn't much time for thinking. If the bear were as hungry as I was, there'd soon be little enough of Tom Stubbs left. On he came, with his long silky hair sweeping over the ice, and a low growling kind of noise now and then, as if he was talking to himself about the good supper he'd have presently. I thought, nat'rally, missy, that it was all up with poor Tom, when all on a sudden it flashed through me that I'd heard bears wouldn't touch a man if they thought he was dead, so down I lay with my face on the ice, never moving so much as a finger, and trying to hold my breath. It seemed a long time before the beast got up to the place where I was, but that was nothing to the time he stayed sniffing all round me, and poking me with his cold nose. Minutes seems as long as years sometimes, missy, and that was just my case now. I fancied he'd hear my heart beat, and find me out, and

swallow me promiscuous ; but he was only a poor stupid brute after all, so he let himself be cheated, and at last he moved away, a-growling softly to himself as he went, as if he was grumbling at being baulked of his meal. I didn't dare stir for ever so long, and indeed I was almost dead with the fright and the cold ; but as I strained my ears to listen, I couldn't hear any more of the bear, but I fancied I heard the sound of oars. I lifted up my head gently and looked round. The bear was out of sight behind the hill ; but just coming out of the inlet, there was the boat with Joe, and Mounseer, and Will Stokes. Oh ! but that was a blessed sight, missy ; they had been kept ashore by the fog all this time, but now the moon made it as bright as day, and they were all looking out for me ; so I stood up, and they soon saw me and gave a hearty cheer. They rowed to the point where I'd landed in the evening, and I was soon sitting in the boat, telling 'em all my adventures. Mounseer was all alive about the bear. 'We'll have him !' he said, 'we'll skin him ! we'll make a beautiful skeleton of him ! To-morrow we'll have a great bear-hunt on the iceberg !' However, missy, Mounseer didn't have his way. As we got near the schooner I was sitting staring at the iceberg, feeling very queer, when all on a sudden it began to move. The tall sharp peaks shook, and then dipped down into the sea. The

great mass turned right over and floated away to the south. 'Twas an awful sight, a wonderful sight, missy, and the noise that came with it was like thunder. The water was disturbed as far as we could see, and all covered with foam. We never said a word to one another, but watched, with our mouths open, while the great thing sailed away, till we could see it no more."

"And what became of the bear?" I inquired.

"I can't say, missy," replied Stubbs, with a smile. "Perhaps he saved himself by swimming, and perhaps the fishes made a skeleton of him, instead of Mounseer. Anyways, I never saw him again."

Such were the tales with which the old sailor beguiled the time when I visited the lighthouse, and no doubt it was agreeable to him to meet with a listener who never thought of disputing his facts. The tales of his prowess in war were quite as wonderful, in their way, as the specimen I have given of his more peaceful adventures; but he painted scenes of horror in colours too strong and vivid for my taste, so I will not repeat them here.

I can truly say that the happiest day of the week to me was Sunday, for on that day I had most of my father's company. In the morning he sometimes took me with him in the hired palanquin, which was his only mode of conveyance, to the cathedral, where, however, the service was read, not chanted, as in cathedrals at

home. I was too young to understand much of what I heard, and I am afraid I looked about me most part of the time I was there. The marble monuments were a study for me, and I looked with curiosity at the pews where the grandees of the place sat in state in arm-chairs; gay scarlet and purple uniforms on the gentlemen, and brilliant dresses on the ladies. Then there were punkahs all down each side of the church, moved to and fro by ropes passed through the wall to natives outside; and these punkahs never moved in time together, and I could not help watching them, till they produced the very natural effect of sending me to sleep. I usually woke as we were getting into the palanquin to go home. The rest of the day was very happy. When we reached our own door, the bearers placed the palanquin in the verandah, and lay down to sleep in the shade while we dined, and after dinner Mrs. Armstrong, arrayed in a black silk gown, and white China crape shawl,—carefully preserved relics of better days,—descended with dignified step, entered the palanquin, and was carried away to attend afternoon service at the cathedral. On her way back, she used to spend an hour or two with a friend, so we were freed from her company for the afternoon, and my father took charge of the sick-room. This was delightful to me, for he scorned Mrs. Armstrong's theory of my society being

injurious to my mother, and I was allowed to stay beside her, and talk to her without hindrance or rebuke. Thus I could tell her all the adventures of the past week, such as they were, and she listened, with my hand in hers, and a smile on the sweet white face, that I always thought more lovely than any other face I ever saw. By and by my father would read to her Psalms, and passages from the Bible, and prayers; and then he took me on his knee and showed me a book of Sunday pictures, and explained them to me in simple language that I never forgot. The happiness of the day was complete if Mrs. Armstrong remained away to drink tea with her friend, for then my father and I had our tea in the sick-room, and I carried to and fro my mother's cup and saucer, and the cake that she would try to eat for our gratification.

I had many a tale to tell her on these occasions, of my hours passed in the lighthouse, and the wonderful adventures related to me by Tom Stubbs. One day, after I had been repeating his account of a battle he had had somewhere in the West Indies with a shark, one of whose teeth he still carried in his pocket, my father said:—

“Now it is my turn to talk, Clary; and I've been keeping a bit of good news for you these two days, that I might tell it just now.”

Of course I looked up eagerly, and he continued, speaking more to my mother than to me, "One of my brother clerks at Conway's has lent me his house on Malabar Hill for three months, and we can move into it on Tuesday. It is a nice place, Lucy, and God knows how thankful I shall be to get you out of this hole, even for a time."

"But you, dear?" my mother said anxiously. "It will be so far from the fort. What will you do?"

"Claxton leaves his horse and buggy for me; so I can take you for a drive when you like, besides using the animal for my own purposes. I shall ride or drive in every day."

"Then it is delightful news, is it not, Clary?" said my mother, with brightened looks. "How long it is, Ernest, since I have seen you on horseback."

"Long, indeed!" he repeated, in a tone so grave, that it startled me, and made my mother shrink and look nervously at him; but the next moment he had taken me on his knee, and was asking what I had to say to the new plan.

"I like it very much," I replied, "only I wish Tom Stubbs could go too."

"Poor little Clary!" he said; "you will miss your old friend. We'll ask him to come and 'spin a yarn' sometimes at the other house. King Bandicoot will

have his palace to himself now, Clary, and I hope we may never come back to the old barn again."

I liked the thought of change, but it was not all joy on Monday evening, when my father went with me to the lighthouse to take leave of old Tom. For four or five weeks I had gone almost daily up to the lantern, and had always been cordially welcomed by the old sailor; and now I was to go there no more. Tom looked gratified when my father said we hoped to see him at Malabar Hill.

"Thank'ee kindly, sir," he said, pulling the thin lock of grey hair that hung over his eye. "I'll be proud to come. Lord, sir, you might think an old fellow like me, knocked about the world from his cradle, might have got to be as tough as leather, heart and all, and so I thought I was. But, bless ye, sir, the sick lady over there don't listen for little missy's voice more eager than I do. When I hear the little feet a-coming up the stair there, I feel a'most no-how; and how I shall ever get on without her, I'm sure I can't say."

"She will miss you very much, Mr. Stubbs," rejoined my father; "and if we ever come back to Colaba, she will soon find her way hither again."

"You'll be heartily welcome, little missy," Tom said, looking kindly at me; then, turning to my father, he added, "I made bold, sir, to ask Captain Scott for a

day's leave to-morrow, in case I might be useful, helping you in your move. I didn't know but what you might be glad to have some one to help you carry madam down the stairs, and I've a good strong pair of arms still. I hope you won't think it a liberty, sir."

"That I shall not," replied my father warmly; and, accordingly, Tom was at our house the following day, packing our goods, and making himself useful in a thousand ingenious ways. Our small stock of furniture was despatched quite early, followed by Mrs. Armstrong in a palanquin; and at five o'clock my mother was conveyed down-stairs, with Tom's assistance, and placed beside me in Mrs. Scott's carriage, lent to us for this occasion. My father mounted to the box, and so we left our home to the rats and bats, Tom striding along behind us with vigorous steps. The drive was full of amusement for me. We passed the barracks, with a few soldiers drilling on the green in front; the Esplanade, now in part covered with a little town of tents and temporary houses, among bushes of the castor-oil plant; and a crowd of carriages full of gaily-dressed people, assembled round a pavilion where a military band was playing; then through the busy bazaar and the quiet country roads, till we swept past the sea-board and up the slope of Malabar Hill. The gate of a compound just on the brow of the hill stood

invitingly open ; we entered, and, passing through a garden gay with flowers, stopped at a bungalow of two stories, with a deep verandah shading the lower windows. By some means Tom Stubbs had made his way hither before us, and was the first to give me welcome.

“ A nice place, missy,” he said, “ a sweet purty place, ma’am ; and I hope you’ll all have your health here.”

It did, indeed, seem like another world. The air was far cooler and fresher than in the lower ground, and my spirits rose as I breathed it. While they laid my mother on a couch that Mrs. Armstrong had wheeled into the verandah for her, I flew hither and thither to take a survey of our new dwelling. There were two sitting-rooms below, and a bedroom, which would of course be my mother’s ; and up-stairs was Mrs. Armstrong’s room, with my little bed in the corner, besides two or three chambers, more or less furnished, not required for our use. The views all round the house were lovely, and I rejoiced to find that, across Back Bay, I could see the lighthouse where I had spent so many happy hours. I was so rampant with the sense of novelty and freedom, and the freshness of the hill-air, that I needed several checks from Mrs. Armstrong, before being tamed down sufficiently to sit at the table, and partake of the early tea she had prepared for us.

As soon as the meal was over, I was in the garden again, watching the flames which rose here and there along the shore of Back Bay, and understanding, for the first time, from a few words dropped by my father, that on those flaming piles under the dense palm-woods, the Hindoos were burning their dead.



CHAPTER III.

MALABAR HILL.

FOR a week from this time, my mother was so much better than usual, that I had hardly time to miss old Tom. I shall never forget the mornings passed in that sweet garden, where flowers that are the pride of English hothouses, grew in rich profusion. There were double pomegranate blossoms of dazzling scarlet, jessamines covered with large snow-white stars, creeping plants of every colour, bell-shaped blossoms that I fitted on my fingers and called "fairy foolscaps," and convolvulus-flowers of pink and blue, in which I might have hidden my whole face. From this Paradise we could watch the sun rise over the Ghauts, with their castellated shapes and soft purple colours, and see the whole space of sea and land between us and them, gradually kindle into light and beauty.

But by and by my mother drooped again, and once

more I was condemned to pass long hours in solitude. There were drawbacks to our Paradise too. The house was as full of rats as the one we had left, and moreover, when darkness fell, myriads of frogs came hopping in from the garden at every window. These last even made their way into the upper rooms, and no place was secure from them; and, though they were harmless, yet it was not pleasant to touch them accidentally, or to feel it necessary to pick one's way across the room, lest one should crush them. There were fearful rumours of snakes also, and I saw a hooded cobra that Ali and my father had killed before breakfast one morning in the verandah.

It was now December, and Bombay was very gay. I sometimes saw carriages filled with brightly-dressed ladies, and gentlemen in uniform, pass our gate on their way to some party; but my father seldom had an engagement, and we lived as quietly as we had done at Colaba.

One evening I had been watching the gardener watering the plants, and I was wondering where I could find a fresh amusement after he had finished his task, when I caught sight of a white kitten frisking among the bushes. Here was a plaything come in the very moment of need, and the pretty creature coyly met my advances, and beguiled me to a part of the

garden close to the boundary wall of our neighbour's compound. She was trying to seize, with teeth and claws, the corner of my pinafore, as I gently shook it to tempt her nearer to me, when I heard a rustling sound, and, looking up, saw a lady watching me from the other side of the wall. I stood still, and gazed in return, for I had not often seen so pleasant a sight as that lady's face, with its kind smile, and the English bloom not yet faded from the rounded cheek. She was dressed in black, and wore a black hat over her golden hair, and she struck me as the tallest woman I had ever seen.

"Is that your kitten?" she asked, pointing to my little playmate.

"No," I said, "I don't know whose it is. I found it playing here."

"Then, I think it belongs to my cousin," she rejoined, "for there is a whole army of white cats and kittens running wild about this place. You may have that one for your own if you can keep it, but you had better tie a collar round its neck, or you will not know it again."

I thanked the lady warmly, and carried my new treasure into the house, fetched milk for her to drink, and adorned her neck with a scarlet ribbon. By the time all this was done, my father had come home, and

I did not go out again till the moon was up; when, leaving my kitten asleep, I went with him down the broad road towards the shore, where we lingered long, watching the tide steal over the low black rocks.

The next evening, when the kitten and I had raced and romped together till we were tired, and she lay curled up asleep, looking like a tiny heap of snow on the path, I again saw the lady in black standing by the boundary wall. Her smile was so pleasant, that I nodded, as to an old friend.

"Well, little girl," she said, "are you alone again this evening? Have you no playfellows?"

"Not alone to-day," I answered, pointing to the kitten. "Oh! I've had such a happy day with her, and I'm so much obliged to you for giving her to me!"

"You are easily made happy, my child," the lady answered. "I am a bigger child than you, and I have no kitten of my own, so I have been feeling very lonely, and I thought I would come and see if you were in your garden. What beautiful flowers you have there! Do you like flowers?"

"Oh! yes," I answered, "and we had none where we lived before."

"I should like to show you my Guernsey lilies," said my new acquaintance; "don't you think you might climb over this low wall?"

"But what am I to do with my cat? She might wake up and run away," I suggested; but catching sight, at the moment, of Ali lounging in the verandah, I called to him to have an eye to the kitten, and to give an account of my whereabouts to Mrs. Armstrong, should she inquire for me; then, giving my hand to the lady, I soon scrambled over the wall, and stood beside her in a field that would have been green in England, and probably had been green enough during the rains, but was now covered with dried-up brownish grass.

"Before we proceed," said the lady, "it seems to me fitting that we should know each other's names. Will you tell me yours?"

"My name is Clarissa Almería Grantham," I replied, with the pride I usually felt in making the announcement.

"Allow me to pay the tribute of respect due to the bearer of so long, so euphonious, and so magnificent a name," said my tall companion, with mock gravity, curtsying down to the ground; then, seeing me shrink with a child's natural dread of ridicule, she continued in a playful tone; "I am almost ashamed to tell you what a poor short little name mine is. I am called 'Anne Clay.' Now give me your hand, little Clarissa, and we will go and look at my lilies. We will keep to

the path to-day. Sometimes I go across the grass, but my cousin constantly warns me I shall some day be bitten by a snake, so I will not run any risks with you."

We crossed the field to the higher ground, whence the whole of the compound was visible. It was a large enclosure, thickly planted in parts with trees, and there were six or eight low-roofed bungalows scattered about it, some of them connected with each other by covered ways. One of these contained reception-rooms, another was set apart for accidental guests, a third contained the sleeping-apartments and dressing-rooms of the master and mistress of the family. All this Miss Clay explained to me; "and that," she continued, "is the children's bungalow, where my three tiny cousins live, but just now the little creatures are gone, all beflooned and bedizened, to take a drive with their mamma; so you must wait for another opportunity to see them. Come this way, and I will show you my own bungalow."

This was next to the children's; and tethered close to it was a gazelle, evidently a pet, for it came up to Miss Clay fearlessly. She called to a servant to bring some bread, and the pretty creature ate from her hand, looking somewhat anxiously at me now and then with its large dark eyes. "This is my pet, little Cla-

rissa," Miss Clay said, as the gazelle bent his head caressingly to her hand. "He is a little shy of strangers, especially since he was frightened by some dogs a few days ago. I had a pretty antelope, but the jackals killed it one sad night, and it was buried under that tree. Now let me show you my rooms." I followed her into her little bungalow, where, in days to come, I was to spend some of my happiest hours; and I could not repress an exclamation when I saw a room very unlike, in its tasteful and elegant arrangements, any thing I had ever seen before. There were pictures on the walls, representing shady pools, ivied churches, rural mills, with great mossy wheels plashing in cool rivers; scenery such as I had never seen in my life, but of which I felt at a glance the freshness and beauty. The furniture was of the Bombay blackwood, very richly carved, and adorned with gold-coloured damask; and a Persian carpet was laid over the matting on the floor. On the table were a number of books, with all the appliances for drawing and work; and a small pianoforte stood open, with music on the desk. Miss Clay watched my enjoyment with a smile, and did not interrupt my curious examination of all her property. At last I turned to her. "Is this beautiful room really yours?" I asked.

"Really mine, now," she said, with something like a

sigh; "and this door opens into my bedroom; and there my ayah sleeps; and so, you see, this is quite my own house. It is all very nice, I know, but I have not been here long, and every thing seems new and strange to me. I shall like it in time, I daresay;" and she sighed again.

I looked at her with wonder, but she seemed for a few minutes so lost in thought as to have forgotten my presence; so I resumed my inspection of her pictures and statuettes. By and by she laid her hand on my shoulder and said, "I see you like looking at pictures. All these are views near my old home that I have left, and these little ornaments were in my room at home in England. That is why I love them. The new home can never be like the old one."

Now, the only change of abode I could remember in my own case, had been very much for the better, and I never thought with regret of the tumble-down house at Colaba, though I might sometimes wish to revisit the lighthouse in its neighbourhood. But then Miss Clay had come from England, that fairy-land of my imagination, and therefore a little reflection made me understand her regret. A sound of wheels in the compound roused Miss Clay, who had again fallen into a reverie. "Come, Clarissa," she said, "I hear my cousins returning, and I should like you to see them."

I felt very shy as I followed her towards the principal bungalow, and still more so as we stood under the verandah in front of it, and saw a carriage driven to the door, preceded by two running footmen in gay liveries. I tried to hide myself behind Miss Clay as the party dismounted from the carriage; first an ayah, with a moon-faced baby enveloped in embroidered muslin; then a pair of twin girls about three years old, bright as humming-birds, with cherry-coloured plumes and sashes; and then the mamma, in flowing robes of green silk, and with a whole garland of roses in her bonnet. As I watched them, I was conscious for the first time in my life, with a pang of false shame, that I was poorly clad, and I felt a longing desire to make a rush homewards, only that I was doubtful of the way. Meantime the twins had found me out, and were trying to pull me forward, gabbling all the time in Hindustani, of which language I understood but little. They were short, fat children, with pretty features and flaxen hair, and the colourless cheeks almost universal where seclusion from sunshine is a necessity of the climate. They were also, like all Indian children, untroubled with any shyness, and I fancied they were making remarks on me very freely, judging by Miss Clay's anxiety to hush them. She tried to defend me from their persecutions, but her words of remonstrance were few.

"I have no chance with these magpies, Clarissa," she said, laughing; "they can't speak my language, and I can't speak theirs, so my scoldings are of very little avail. You must take your own part, and tell them they are very rude."

"It doesn't matter," I said, "I don't know what they mean, except a word now and then."

"Why, what little girl have you got hold of, Anne?" said the lady in green, whom I knew to be Mrs. Farrer; "does she mean she can't speak Hindustani? How in the world came she here?"

Miss Clay told my name, and how she had made my acquaintance; and I, on being questioned, said that I had had very little to say to any body but my parents and Mrs. Armstrong, by my father's special desire. Mrs. Farrer exclaimed, "What a queer fancy!" and then addressed Miss Clay again, leaving me to my small tormentors.

"I am glad you have found something to amuse you, Anne, as you wouldn't go with us. It really was a pity you were not at the band. Every one was there, and the music was beautiful."

"Thank you, I was better here," Miss Clay replied quietly; then taking my hand she added, "I think I must take you away from my roly-poly cousins, now, Clarissa."

I answered, "Oh! thank you," with an eagerness that made her laugh. "There, go away, Rosa and Emily," and she tickled them into convulsions of laughter, and left them rolling helplessly on the floor, while she led me away. All this time we had been in the verandah, still lighted by the sun's latest rays. Miss Clay took me through the drawing-room, where the lamps were already burning with a brightness that dazzled me, and made me pause on the threshold with an exclamation of astonishment. In truth, I had never seen or imagined such splendour, and it seemed to me a realization of Aladdin's palace. My companion seemed amused. "It is a pretty room, is it not?" she said, "and our Parsee butler understands how to light it."

A pretty room, indeed! It seemed to me a scene of enchantment, and I passed out into the dusky twilight, quite bewildered with its splendour. Outside the bungalow were ranged a number of flower-pots, but the colours of the flowers were no longer distinguishable, except that one or two aloes seemed to make their tall pyramids of bells visible by their own pure whiteness. Again we crossed the path to the boundary wall, looking out sharply, lest every twig in our way might prove to be a snake. I began to think I had been absent from home a long time, and to fear Mrs. Armstrong

might take occasion to reprove me, so it was with no small relief that, as I prepared to climb over the wall with Miss Clay's assistance, I saw my father step out from the shadows.

"Papa, papa," I cried, "I have been with Miss Clay, the lady that gave me my little cat."

He lifted his hat as he thanked Miss Clay warmly for her kindness to his solitary little girl; and she assured him, in reply, that the benefit had been mutual.

"I love children," she added, "and my ignorance of Hindustani prevents my winning my way with most of the little things here. I hope you will let Clarissa come to me again."

"You are very good," he said, "you know not how great a kindness you will be doing her. May I ask," he added, as Miss Clay prepared to leave us, "whether you are related to a dear old friend of mine at Oxford, unheard of for years now, Everard Clay of Balliol?"

She clasped her hands together, with a low cry, and then said, in a trembling voice,

"Ah! he was my brother. It is for him I am wearing this black dress."

"I beg your pardon," my father said, greatly distressed. "I had no idea . . . pray forgive me."

"I am so glad you have told me," she replied. "My cousins never knew him, and I so often long to speak of

him. And you ah! your name is Grantham? I have heard him speak of Charlie Grantham many and many a time. I do not think he knew what had become of you, but your name occurred in many a story of his Oxford life. I cannot stay now," she said, as she held out her hand, "but, Mr. Grantham, you must let me try to be kind to the child of Everard's friend, and to Mrs. Grantham too," she added shyly, "if I may. Will you ask her if I may come and see her?"

"Thank you a thousand times," my father answered, almost with emotion; "I am sure my poor Lucy will gladly see you, and her life is lonely and sad. The climate has never suited her, and she is very weak now. A visit from you would be a real boon, and I will prepare her for it."

"Tell her Clarissa will bring me to her to-morrow, if she has no objection. Oh! Mr. Grantham, you do not know how glad I shall be if I can feel myself of use to any body in the world! I have asked myself lately why I was here, and what good my life did me. My heart is lighter to-night than for many a long day past. Good-bye, little Clarissa," and she bent her tall figure and kissed my forehead; "good-bye, little friend; you must come and see my Guernsey lilies to-morrow, for we forgot them to-day, after all."



CHAPTER IV.

MISS CLAY.

THUS began my acquaintance with Miss Clay. The next day I led her to the sofa whereon lay my mother, nervously awaiting the visit of a stranger, whose visits ever after were to be watched for with eagerness and pleasure. Mrs. Armstrong looked half-displeased at first, but she could not long resist the gracious manner and gentle words that exercised a charm upon us all. Very soon, we scarcely knew how, it became an established custom for me to go every morning to Miss Clay's pretty sitting-room to take a lesson in reading, or any thing else she saw fit to teach me; and, in the afternoon, after my mother's sleep, it was equally a matter of course for Miss Clay to glide softly into our house, take her place near my mother, and read some pleasant book or sing some pleasant song, that soothed

pain, and caused weariness to be forgotten. Emboldened by her presence, I dared to be much more frequently in the sick-room, and Mrs. Armstrong, in her newly-acquired gentleness, allowed me to remain undisturbed. Sometimes, if my mother were a little better, Miss Clay would stay later, till my father joined us in the verandah; and then she would talk with him of her brother, and listen with delight to tales of the days when Everard Clay and my father had been fast friends. Long years afterwards, when I visited Oxford, and walked down the noble avenue called the Christ-Church Walk, or along the banks of the Cherwell and the Isis, I felt as if I were treading again old haunts of my childhood, so familiar was the name of every place, and so linked with recollections of my father. I even fancied I found the very pool whence Everard Clay was dragged by his friend when their boat had upset, and the former, being unable to swim, had nearly lost his life.

Old Ali used to carry me in his arms, with a thick sunshade over my head, into our neighbours' compound every morning; and deposit me in front of the principal bungalow, under a porch hung with a heavy drapery of crimson passion-flower. Here I waited till Miss Clay came from the breakfast-room, and led me through a covered way to her own apartments, where two or three hours were spent in what she was pleased to call my

studies. When these were over, Ali came to fetch me home again ; but more and more frequently, as time passed on, my kind friend kept me till the afternoon. She would take me into the children's bungalow before the twins were roused from their mid-day sleep, and show me the little creatures lying, with ruffled hair and parted lips, among their toys, and the moon-faced baby in his cot, with his dark nurse sitting beside him. Miss Clay liked to see the merry eyes open and give her a laughing welcome ; and then we all went to the dining-room, chasing each other along the covered way and the deep verandah. I never got over my shyness with Mrs. Farrer, though she was goodnatured and lively. She seemed to me loud and bustling, and even her smart clothes made me feel an awe of her that greatly interfered with my enjoyment when in her presence. The twins sat at the table in high chairs, shouted aloud for every thing they wanted, dipped their fingers into the dishes, and smeared their faces and pinafores with jam ; while the baby sat on the ground with his ayah, and shook his coral and bells, or shrieked for the crust that was his daily treat. At first I found the whole scene extremely bewildering, and as the servants came and went with their bare silent feet, handing me dishes and changing my plate, I was so alarmed that I hung my head and began to cry. Mrs. Farrer asked, in a loud

voice, what ailed me, but Miss Clay understood my feelings, answered for me, and soon made me more comfortable. After the meal, we sometimes adjourned to the plantation that lay to the north of the children's bungalow, and played in the shade. Here Miss Clay showed us how to string white blossoms that were strewed in heaps under the trees, as children in England string daisies into long chains; or she brought out a box of Chinese toys and spread them on the ground. Wonderful toys they were; spiders with quivering legs, tortoises with heads that peeped in and out of their shells, tumblers that rolled hither and thither, and picked themselves up again, after endless vagaries. When the twins were tired of these, Miss Clay would take me with her to her own pretty sitting-room, and give me something to amuse me while she played and sang; or she would read to me, and encourage me to talk of what she read, till it was time for us both to go to my mother.

One morning, towards the end of the year, I found my kind friend in an unusually restless mood. Several times, while I puzzled over my spelling, she rose and paced up and down the room, or struck a few notes on the piano, then again sat down to help me through my difficulties. She had none of her usual calmness that day, and I watched, with surprise, her restless move-

ments, her wandering eyes and flushed cheeks. At last she shut my book.

"I'll tell you what it is, Clary," she said, rising once more, "I'm not fit to do governess to-day, and so we'll put the lessons aside. I feel like a caged lion only half tamed. If I were in England, I would take a long walk over the moorland among the brown fern, and so get rid of my superfluous excitement; but here I can only fidget and fret myself into a fever. What is the matter with me? your great eyes ask. I'll tell you all about it, Clary, and you may understand as much as you can. Letters came to me this morning from my father, to tell me that in a few days I should see him here—yes, here, in this room; and, Clary, if he were to come in at this moment, I should not know him! I have never seen him since I was a little baby. I don't know how he will like me, and I go on thinking over the meeting that is so near, half longing for it, half wishing it was over and done. How puzzled you look, Clary! more utterly posed than you were with those long words in your spelling-book."

She took my face between her two hands, and looked kindly into my eyes, then kissed my forehead.

"Do you know what first drew my heart towards you, little friend?" she said. "It was this little pale face with its eager eyes, reminding me of another little face that

I loved—oh! how dearly—a face that I shall never, never see any more! Poor Clary! you can't tell what to make of me to-day in my strange mood. Don't be afraid, child. Let us come and sit on the step, and I will tell you a story all about myself, for I cannot think about lessons to-day."

She led the way to a door that opened towards the north, into a part of the same plantation that shaded the children's bungalow, and we sat down together on the door-step. I seem to see the place now. The ground under the trees was smooth and hard, and the brushwood all cleared away, that there might be no hiding-place for snakes or other noxious creatures. A few india-rubber trees, with the young leaf at the end of each bough folded in a sheath of rose colour; a few palms, joining their great fans overhead, and here and there a hibiscus with blossoms of crimson or yellow; and beyond all, near the road that wound through the compound, a gay row of oleanders with large double blossoms of pink or white, interspersed with gay pomegranates, or tall bushes of Cape jessamine; this was all we saw, except when one of the native servants crept by on some household mission, in white linen dress and red turban. Miss Clay put her arm round me and drew a long breath.

"I would give it all, gorgeous as it is," she exclaimed,

“for one breath of fresh mountain air. Clary, I'm in a discontented mood, and your quiet looks rebuke me, so I will begin at once to tell my promised tale. It must seem very strange to you that I have no recollection whatever of my father or mother. I was sent home as an infant in charge of a nurse, my parents remaining in India, and before I was three years old my mother died. My earliest remembrances are of a school in London, where I was much the youngest of a party of ten or twelve girls. I hardly know how to make you understand what my life was like there, it was so different from your own, Clary. The house I lived in was like one of the tall houses you have seen in the fort, and our school-room was on the ground floor, looking into a dull London square. To enhance the dulness, the lower half of the windows was of ground glass, so that all we could see of the outer world, at the best, was a scrap of the sky with a foreground of chimney-pots. Our walks were in the dull square, or sometimes in the park, that was not far off, but we tramped along listlessly, two and two, and cared very little for any thing we saw. The school was kept by two sisters—Miss Gilling, who was round and rosy, and Miss Martha Gilling, who was tall and thin. The dispositions of the two ladies differed like their appearance ; the former being easy and goodnatured, the

latter sharp and sour. They were assisted in the charge and education of their flock by resident teachers, French and English, and by a host of masters who came and went perpetually. Miss Gilling sat in state in a room opening into the school-room, taking a little easy duty now and then, and smiling blandly on us all; while Miss Martha managed the house, presided at meals, and carved the joints, which were supplied with such wearisome regularity, that we always knew what was on the table before the covers were removed. All went on methodically, as if each person were a part of some large machine. To most of my companions, there came at intervals the agreeable variety of going home for the holidays; but my home was far over the sea, and I scarcely ever left the Miss Gillings' roof, except, indeed, to pass a few days with them, in the summer vacation, at Worthing or Bognor. If I had a young companion in these trips to the seaside, as sometimes happened, they were very enjoyable. Indeed, I would not have you think I was unhappy at any time under the care of those worthy women. For years I was the youngest pupil, and therefore a privileged pet; besides, I had never known any better or brighter home, and I was very well satisfied. As time passed on, and I ceased to be the youngest, I had harder work, but still I was more the child of the house than the rest. Miss Gilling

took a personal pride in any little success I met with in my studies, and Miss Martha was sparing of rebukes for my want of order, and actually darned my stockings herself.

“But I had my bright days; better than the mornings in holiday-time when, instead of the carpetless school-room, the thick bread almost innocent of butter, and the pale tea brought to a greenish hue by the admixture of a little drop of London milk, I shared the comforts of the Miss Gillings’ luxurious parlour and delicately-served table; better than the evenings when, instead of listening to the ‘*Voyages en Orient*’ of M. de Lamartine, read aloud for the delectation of the young ladies, I sat in an easy chair and enjoyed Walter Scott’s novels; better than each and all other joys a thousandfold, was the delight of receiving a visit from my brother Everard. He was ten years older than I, a schoolboy at Harrow when I first recollect him, running up to see his little sister when he could get leave. He was one, Clary, who could have made a dungeon bright; and the Miss Gillings always treated him with especial favour, and allowed me to be alone with him, contrary to their usual practice in such cases. How I chatted to him, and how willingly he listened! How we laughed and made plans and laughed again! Oh, Clary, how happy we were!

"By and by Everard went to Oxford, and his visits were more rare, and almost more precious. Meanwhile I was leaving childhood behind me, and becoming a tall awkward girl, nearly as tall as I am now, by the time I was fourteen and Everard twenty-four. Just at this period, we made a plan that seemed too entirely delightful ever to be realized, and yet, Clary, I lived to see its bright hopes become sweet realities every day for four happy years.

"By this time (I mean when he was twenty-four), Everard was in holy orders, and doing duty as curate in a small parish among the Surrey hills. His rector was a very aged man, who intended the following year to resign his charge; and the living, being in the gift of an Oxford friend, had already been promised to Everard. Our plan was, that as soon as he should come into possession of this home, I should live with him and keep his house; and, in spite of the remonstrances of Miss Gilling, who thought it a pity that my lessons should be interrupted so early in life, the following June found me the mistress of Everard's pretty rectory, and one of the very happiest creatures on whom the summer sun looked down. It was the prettiest of cottages, perched on the hill-side, with roses on its walls, and flower-beds on its sloping lawn. Ah! Clary," continued Miss Clay, smiling, "dwarfish and

pale those flowers would seem to eyes accustomed to these gorgeous colours, these blossoming trees," and she pointed to the plantation before us; "but to my recollection they are sweet and lovely beyond compare. A proud, busy young housewife I was among my stores of linen, my shelves of grocery; and if at times, for want of forethought in that quiet place, we found ourselves minus tea or sugar, or some such necessary, we only made a joke of the misfortune, and Everard's laugh at my forgetfulness left no sting in my heart.

"I wish I could show you, Clary, the steep hill behind the rectory on a spring morning, with the sunshine gliding down between the red stems of the fir-trees, the downy ferns peeping above the last year's leaves, and the merry blue-bells shaking in the breeze! How you would revel in the spicy scent of the young boughs, so unlike the sickly odours of musk and sandalwood that seem to pervade every thing here! You would not be a prisoner lest the 'sun should smite you,' and how you would enjoy your freedom!

"My brother's parish contained no more than three hundred souls, but he found plenty of work among them for himself and me. The pretty church and the school-house were close beside us, under the hill-side, and I was in the school daily for two or three hours, besides having charge of the choir, and visiting the sick. By

five o'clock, however, I was always in the little drawing-room, listening for the click of the garden-gate, and Everard's brisk step across the garden; for no one but myself must open the door and give him welcome. At dinner we discussed the events of the day, and afterwards, in summer-time, we rambled over the hills, or sat on the lawn till it was time to go in for tea, and we finished the evening with music or reading. In winter our evenings were passed in study, real hard brain-work, very unlike the surface-learning at Miss Gilling's, and I felt a joy I cannot describe, as I found myself becoming a fitter companion for a thoughtful, learned man, like my dear brother Everard.

"I was very fond of my little scholars, of one of them more especially, the little creature of whom your face reminded me, Clary, the first time you looked wistfully up at the tall stranger who questioned you about your cat. I cannot talk much about her, for I loved her dearly. She was always very sickly, though all her brothers and sisters were large and strong; and in the second summer of our acquaintance, she grew worse, and though I took her into the rectory and nursed her myself, carrying her out to lie on the lawn when the day was fine, she never got well again. My little daisy faded away.

"Well, Clary, your old friend is getting prosy, but

my tale is nearly told,—as much of it, at least, as I can tell you. Four years this happy life at the rectory lasted. We had neighbours scattered over the country within a few miles of us, and we saw them at intervals, but when first we lived at the rectory, I was too young to go into society, and Everard would not leave me alone; and as time passed on, and I became a young woman, we found ourselves too happy to make much change in our habits. Thus it happened that we were not very intimate with any body, though exchanging friendly civilities with several families in the neighbourhood.

“The end came, Clary, the end of this bright, blessed life, only eight months ago, though those eight months seem to me longer than the four years that came before them. I am not going to talk to you much about the change, little Clary, but I want you to tell your father how it happened. Everard had been away for three days on business, and I was looking out for his return, listening for the sound of wheels between the gusts of wind and beating showers on a day at the end of March, when I saw a stranger open the garden-gate, and a great terror came over me. I soon knew all. There had been an accident on the railroad, and my darling brother was among the killed.”

Miss Clay hid her face for a few minutes, and then spoke again.

“My father wrote for me to come out, Clary, and I should have joined him up the country, only that he expected an appointment at Bombay; so, when I arrived here, I found orders from him that I should stay with my cousins, Colonel and Mrs. Farrer, for the present. He has now obtained the appointment, and is coming in a few days, and this is why you have found me so unlike myself to-day. Come, child! you are tired with my grave talk; let us go and see if the twins are waking yet.”

I followed her to the children's bungalow, where Rosa and Emily were being dressed in a room at one end of the building. We passed on softly to the other end, to inquire for the moon-faced baby, who was suffering, Miss Clay said, from an attack of fever. The child was dozing, with his light blue eyes half unclosed and his breath coming uneasily. His ayah sat on the floor beside the mat on which he lay, and a Mussulman boy named Ali, who was one of the children's special attendants, was in the verandah outside, with a basket of stones to throw at the crows, which singly or in numbers settled on the neighbouring trees, and threatened to disturb the babe's sleep with their harsh cawing.

"Poor baby!" said Miss Clay, as we returned to the twins, "he was very ill last night; and this evening Mrs. Farrer is going to take him and the twins away for a few days, to a house in Salsette. She thinks the change will do them all good. I shall stay here to await my father's arrival."

We found the twins already dressed, and as the luncheon hour was near, we led them towards the large bungalow, hushing their voices so long as the sound might reach the poor baby. As we neared the drawing-room, and the chatter of the little ones grew loud again, a gentleman came towards us. I knew it was Colonel Farrer, for I had often seen him in the porch while I waited for Miss Clay in the morning, and when he was on the way to his carriage to go to his duty in the fort. He was a kind and courteous man, and had always a pleasant word even for a little girl like me. But for him to be at home at this hour, except on Sunday, was an event so unprecedented, that the twins absolutely shrieked with amazement. In another moment Miss Clay sprang towards him, speaking in a low, eager voice.

"O Philip!" she said, "you have news for me; I am sure you have news."

He smiled and nodded, and she continued almost in a whisper, "Is he come?"

Again Colonel Farrer smiled and nodded.

"O Philip! is he here?" said Miss Clay.

"Don't be agitated, my dear Anne," Colonel Farrer said, taking her hand and drawing it under his arm. "The fact is, the paternal feelings grew so strong, that the Colonel was obliged to obey them, and he hurried on faster than any body ever travelled before, I believe, just to see his daughter's face. Don't keep him waiting now."

The twins and I had listened, open mouthed, to this little dialogue, and as Colonel Farrer led Miss Clay into the drawing-room, we followed in silence. Mrs. Farrer, attired with her accustomed brilliancy, sat in state in a large arm-chair, but I had no thought to waste on her. What I felt eager to see was Miss Clay's father, the stranger whom his own daughter did not know. He rose, and came forward with outstretched arms,—a tall, elderly man, with stiff military bearing, fine features, and snow-white hair and moustache. In a moment she was folded to his heart in a silence that was only broken by her low sobs, and soon afterwards they were sitting side by side on a sofa, Miss Clay looking very white, with downcast eyes, while her father gazed at her without speaking. Presently her whole face quivered, the colour rushed into her cheeks, and,

looking up shyly, as she held out both her hands, she cried,

“O, papa, do try to like me! do love me!”

He took the hands in his, and held them close to his breast, as he said, with a playful smile, “I will try, Anne. I don’t feel as if it would be a very hard task, my darling.”

All this time the twins and I had escaped notice, and were observing all that passed with curious interest, but now the little ones grew tired of being quiet, so they began to perform certain gambols which soon attracted attention to themselves. Colonel Clay turned towards the corner where we stood, and then to Mrs. Farrer :

“Your children, of course?” he said.

“These are mine,” she replied, rising and bringing Rosa and Emily forward; “these are my twin girls, and I have a little boy also, a fine fellow, but he is unfortunately ill.”

Colonel Clay shook hands with his little cousins, speaking to them in Hindustani; and I stood alone, feeling as if I had no right to be there, and nobody cared for me. I twisted the corner of my holland pinafore, and wished the floor would open and swallow me up at once out of sight. But this state of things did not last long; Miss Clay rose, took my hand, and drew

me to the sofa, where she again sat down, keeping me close beside her; and at the first break in the loud chattering of the twins, she said to her father,

“Look, papa; you must make acquaintance with this little girl too. She is a dear little friend of mine, and her father was Everard’s friend at Oxford.”

“She has indeed strong claims on me,” he answered, as he took my hand; and then asking my name, and speaking a few words with the same courtesy, stiff yet kind, that he would have used had I been twenty years older, he made me feel quite at home again. After luncheon, at which meal the twins were especially uproarious, in the prospect of their journey to Salsette, Colonel Farrer declared that he must return to his office, and he offered to drop me at home as he passed, so I took leave of the party and climbed into his buggy.

In a few minutes, I was established on a stool beside my mother’s couch, telling her the events of the morning, and how I thought Colonel Clay, in spite of his stiff looks, would be a very good papa to my kind friend. My mother smoothed my hair with her thin hand as she listened, and then said,

“Poor little Clary! I am afraid it will make a sad change for you.”

“A change for me!” I repeated, her meaning flashing upon me and sending the colour into my face.

"O, mamma! do you think Miss Clay will not care for me now? But indeed she will, mamma, I am sure she will!" and I told how kindly she had called me forward to be presented to her father.

"She will not forget you, Clary. Miss Clay is not a person to forget her friends," my mother answered warmly; "but she will have new duties and claims upon her now, and you must not expect to see her so often. To begin, Clary; I don't think you can go to her again in the morning until she bids you. Colonel Clay may want her at that time."

I laid my head down on my mother's pillow, trying not to cry at the thought of my happy mornings being all past and gone, and the best comfort was to feel her hand still fondling me.

"We must coax Mrs. Armstrong to let you be very often with me, dear," she said; "I like you to talk to me now I am so much better. Do you know, papa is coming back early this evening to take me for a drive in the buggy? He promised to find room at our feet for my little Clary."

At this speech I lifted my head again and smiled, for my mother's going out was a very unaccustomed and joyful event, and the prospect of it, with the help of my kitten's playfulness, enabled me to get through the intervening hours with tolerable spirit. In due time

we set forth, descended the hill, and paused near the shore, that my mother, lying back on her cushions, might be refreshed by the sea-breeze; while I, looking hither and thither, was amused to see the toddy-drawers climbing like monkeys to the top of the tall Palmyra palms, with the aid only of a hoop that passed round their body and the stem of the tree; or the Governor's carriage pass by with its four horses, the postilions in high jack-boots, red coats, and white muslin turbans. There were parties of children, too; some carried by bearers, some on ponies, with a crowd of ayahs following, clad in white drapery, and with bangles on their arms and rings in their noses, talking in loud tones and with much gesticulation. As we passed on to the part of the road called Breach Candy, the scene grew still more animated. Carriages were flitting by, or pausing to let the sea-breeze fan the pale faces of their languid occupants; the parties of children were more numerous, and ladies, with attendant cavaliers, were met not unfrequently. It was a pleasant place; the waters of the Indian Ocean, bringing a breath of freshness, bathed the low black rocks on the left, while on the right were villas scattered among gardens and plantations. In one place a white Hindoo temple rose between us and the sea, and farther on was a Parsee villa, with its extensive gardens; a little

farther still, as we drove along a raised causeway that protects the low flats from incursions of the sea, Mrs. Farrer's carriage swept past us on its way to Salsette. The poor moon-faced baby looked very disconsolate, and as if his huge feathers weighed his head on one side; but the twins were in high spirits, and shrieked a cordial recognition as they caught sight of me. Not long afterwards we met a group of riders, one of them a lady, who sat her horse with graceful ease, as she chatted with the white-haired gentleman beside her. The pretty golden hair, and a peep of the rounded cheek had told me who it was before she turned.

"Yes!" I exclaimed, clapping my hands, as the face with its sweet bright smile looked towards us, "it is Miss Clay, *my* Miss Clay!" She heard me, but she did not stop, only kissed her hand and nodded, and rode on. No doubt my mother was right. Miss Clay had new claims, she could not be all that she had been to us, and yet I did not like to think so. I could not get rid of the subject, till we entered the Mahim woods, and then the novelty of the scene attracted my attention. There were palms of every age, from the little green points just piercing the soil, or the first young leaves just spreading over the ground like a tuft of green fern, to the giant stems tossing their crowns a hundred feet above the earth.



The Evening Drive—Miss Clay recognized.

Then there were huts in the thickest shade, from which dogs ran out and barked, or wild brown children, leaping and yelling, made the woods ring with their unearthly voices. Now we met two or three women with yellow marigolds in their smooth black hair, and reddish sarees wrapped about them, carrying on their heads copper vessels they had just filled with water from the tank; and presently we saw the tank itself, set like a natural lake in a margin of wood, with the image of the white temple on the farther bank lying on its waters, beyond the clusters of white and red water-lilies, that were closing for the night.

We turned to go home where a few better dwellings clustered about the remains of a Portuguese convent and college, and were glad to light our lamps, for the wood was already dark. By the time we again reached the shore, the moon was up, shining with a brilliancy that rivalled the daylight. My mother enjoyed her drive to the very end, and declared herself not too tired. As we ascended Malabar Hill (the syce, or groom, running backwards before the horse to encourage him, according to the custom of the country), my father expressed much alarm at the prospect of meeting Mrs. Armstrong, and pretended to be summoning all his courage for the encounter. She was waiting for us in

the garden, and he called to her cheerfully, as we entered our own gate,

"Well, here we are, Mrs. Armstrong; you must have thought we were lost; but the land-wind won't begin to blow for an hour yet, and we have had a delightful expedition."

"Indeed, I'm happy to hear it, Mr. Grantham," she answered, in rather a melancholy tone. "I'm sure I hope Mrs. Grantham will be none the worse for so much fatigue."

"What an old croaker it is!" muttered my father; but my mother's gentle voice interposed.

"I am sure it can do me nothing but good," she said; "I never enjoyed any thing so much."

Mrs. Armstrong's "I'm sure I'm glad to hear it," was so provokingly incredulous and dismal, that my father could hardly have let it pass, but that my mother at the moment asked him to carry her into the house, and his anxious care for her soon absorbed all his attention.



CHAPTER V.

SALSETTE.

HAVE not spoken of my morning walks with my father while we lived at Malabar Hill, and yet they were among my greatest delights. Sometimes we wandered out to Malabar Point, where the Governor has a residence, at that time vacant. Just below it are the ruins of an old temple, and we liked to sit on the fallen stones and listen to the sea on the rocks. There is a cleft not easy of access near the Point, considered peculiarly sacred by the Hindoos, who believe that when they pass through it, they leave their sins behind them; and sometimes, in our early visits to the spot, we saw

strange figures who had come on pilgrimage to scramble through the cave. We sometimes encountered uncouth objects, too, on our road along the crest of the hill; religious mendicants, their bodies rubbed with wood-ashes, which gave them a livid tint, while, to add to the general ghastliness of their appearance, some of them had painted their faces and sides with streaks of white. My greatest terror, however, on this road, was an old man sitting on the floor of a shed, immovable, with his eyes fixed on the wall. There he was in his unchanging hideousness, day after day. He, too, was a Hindoo devotee fulfilling a vow, and looked upon by his own people with special veneration; but I always clung tightly to my father's hand and hurried my steps as we passed the shed that contained this frightful object. On the opposite side of the road was a long flight of steps descending to a village, considered to be a place of peculiar sanctity by the Hindoos. Once or twice we went a little way down, and saw a number of temples about a tank. My father told me that some of the Brahmins living there had never allowed their eyes to be polluted by looking on an European dwelling.

In another of our frequent walks, we passed some iron gates, with high walls on either side, and I never could help looking through the bars, though matted boughs hid from my sight the "Towers of Silence" which

I knew stood within. These were circular buildings, hollow, with an iron grating at the top, on which the Parsees, the descendants of the old Persian Zoroastrians, or fire-worshippers, exposed their dead to the birds of prey. The grim silence of the enclosure was often broken by the heavy flapping of the vulture's wing, and often a row of the obscene birds sat stupidly blinking on the outer wall. I shuddered as I thought of their horrible banquet, and hurried on.

Sometimes, through the open door of a Hindoo temple, we caught sight of ugly, many-handed idols, and saw the priest decking the shrine with leaves and flowers, or making a noisy clamour with bells and tom-toms. At some of the tanks by the wayside, people were drawing water, and performing their simple ablutions by emptying their brass water-vessels over their heads. In others, buffaloes were slaking their thirst. We met groups of women returning homewards, with water-pots poised on their heads, and children sitting on their hips; and, sometimes, parties of English ladies and gentlemen riding to enjoy the freshness of the dawn.

On the very first morning after Colonel Clay's arrival, I had a proof that Miss Clay thought of me still, for, as my father and I passed out of our own compound into the shadow of our neighbour's pretty mimosa-trees on the high road, we met a groom leading

a pony not larger than a Newfoundland dog, with a little Spanish saddle on its back. The man held out towards me a twisted note, which I begged my father to take, as I was not yet able to read handwriting; and he presently told me Miss Clay had sent her little cousin Rose's pony for me to ride, and that it would come every morning while the Farrers were absent. This was joyful news, for, with this aid, our expeditions could be longer, and I had no fears while my father walked beside my steed. But later, when he was gone to his office, the hours seemed very long and dull. My mother slept late after the unusual fatigues of the previous evening, and I grew very weary of my doll's company in the verandah. My cat was in wild spirits, and frisked in the sunshine, whither I could not follow her; and I was glad indeed when at length I heard my mother's weak voice call me from the adjoining room. The rest of the day passed happily enough, and in the evening we all went out again for a drive. This time we drove, at my entreaty, through the native town, where there was much to amuse me. The tall houses were thrown open, and there were people lounging in the carved and gaily-painted balconies. Now we passed a shigram, or close carriage, containing a party of Parsee ladies; then a cart hung with gay red curtains and drawn by two white bullocks, conveying

some chattering Hindoo women ; presently an Arab in his Bedouin dress rode by, on one of the beautiful horses he had lately brought across from his desert ; or a handsome Affghan well mounted and well armed. Parsee gentlemen driving high-stepping horses, and English ladies in handsome carriages were to be met here. Now and then, too, might be seen a Persian with tall black lambskin cap above his fair and handsome face, and his person clad in pale blue, or green, or yellow robes ; and women in silken sarees gossipped round the wells, before wending homewards with their water-pots.

The buildings were as varied as the people. The open fronts of the shops showed the dyer's brilliant draperies, the brazier's display of bright vessels, or the Jew-goldsmith's store of trinkets. Here stood a simple Buddhist temple, there a Hindoo shrine with flower-pots before it, and there a mosque into which a crowd of Mussulmen were hurrying,—a domed building, with delicately carved windows, looking like an ivory toy, and lighted up at dusk with lamps in green glasses that produced a pretty moonlight effect. Between the buildings, here and there, were trees on which hung all day what might be taken for rags, but were in fact large bats, or flying foxes, that, safely suspended to a twig by the hooks on their wings, were sleeping away the day,

ready to wake at dusk and flit through the lighted rooms around them.

All these sights amused me, but wearied my mother, and our second drive was hardly so successful as the first. The next day passed very quietly, the only excitement being caused by a huge peacock, that came sailing in through one of our upper windows, and strutted about the verandah, till it was induced at length to walk down the stairs and pass out into the garden. There was no drive for us in the evening, and my father looked sad when he came from my mother's room, and, silently taking my hand, strolled for awhile in the garden. I went to bed with a heavy heart, feeling as if the old sad times were come back again. The following morning, however, as we returned from our stroll, and before my father had lifted me from the pony, Miss Clay came into the compound, and I welcomed her with a cry of joy. "Poor little Clary," she said, as she stooped to kiss me, "did you think you were forgotten? I have been very busy, or I should have sent for you." She came and sat with us in the verandah, asking for my mother, and lamenting to hear she had been over-tired. As to me, I was quite happy to have her again, and to see that she was just the same as before. I stood with my hand in hers, listening to her pleasant voice, and patiently waiting till she should

address me again. I heard her speak of having met us in our first drive, and of having thought it better not to stop and speak to us, lest my mother should be nervous; and I rejoiced to think how good and considerate this dear friend was.

"I came," she said, presently, "with a proposition which I fear you cannot entertain, since Mrs. Grantham is complaining. Do you remember that to-morrow is Christmas Day? Ah! in this strange land one forgets times and seasons, but nevertheless, in spite of the heat and the blaze of sunshine, Christmas is here. Colonel Farrer, and papa—oh, Clary! how sweet it is to have a papa of one's own, isn't it?—Colonel Farrer and papa and I are going to drive out this evening to join Mrs. Farrer, and we almost hoped we might tempt you and Clary to come too."

"A thousand thanks," my father answered, "but it is quite impossible. I could not leave my poor wife."

"I feared not, when you said she was not so well," continued Miss Clay, "but I hope you will spare Clary. It will be a little change for her, and I will look after her in every possible way. There is some plan for an expedition to Bassein, but my father intends that we shall return here Tuesday evening. From Saturday till Tuesday, he says, will be the longest holiday he has taken for years."

Every objection on the score of my being a troublesome charge was playfully overruled by Miss Clay, and that same evening found me sitting shyly opposite to Colonel Clay in a luxurious carriage, rolling along at a rapid pace. It was not till we had left the Mahim woods on our right, and crossed the causeway that connects the island of Bombay with Salsette, that I took courage to look about me. So far as I remember, the road was not without beauty, passing through unenclosed land, varied in outline and studded with trees, "like a gentleman's park in England," as Miss Clay remarked, "only for the dried-up grass, instead of green turf by knoll and dell." Away to the right, where flowed the Tannah river or strait, that makes Salsette an island, a white sail might be seen now and then through the trees, and farther still were undulating hills fading away in the distance. It was nearly dark when we reached our destination, and, passing through a gate and a sort of avenue, stopped in front of a large irregular building, with a fountain playing in a stone basin opposite to the porch. The twins came rushing out to meet us, followed by a troop of ayahs and bearers, and I found myself borne, as it were by a flood, into the house and up the staircase into a chamber where a dinner-table was laid out under a blaze of many lamps.

"Here you are!" cried Mrs. Farrer, entering the

room by the window at the farther end. "How are you, Philip? Welcome, Colonel Clay. Oh, Anne! I'm very glad to see you, and you've brought little Grantham, I see. Baby is a great deal better, and this is the dullest place in all the world."

"We don't mean to let it be dull now," said Colonel Farrer, smiling.

"Ah, no, we shall do very well now. Mr. and Mrs. Dwight are here, and Major Conway and Mr. Collier. Come out into the balcony. We've voted it our drawing-room, for we have been obliged to give up the room below to the children, and to make this the dining-room."

She led the way, and Miss Clay followed, with me holding fast by her skirts; and we found ourselves in a square balcony, with canvas roof, overhanging a garden, whose neglected condition was veiled by the evening shades, while another fountain made a plashing sound that seemed a promise of coolness and refreshment, and sent its dancing waters so high into the air, that they caught a gleam of light now and then from the lamps within the room behind us. There were several persons seated on chairs in the balcony, and they rose to greet my companions. One only of these I had seen before, Mr. Collier, who recognized me in the dying light, and found a place for me when the

assembled company again sat down. A little tranquil and rather stiff conversation followed, but was soon interrupted by an alarm that the twins were present, and had begun perilling their precious lives by climbing up the iron rails of the balcony. They were forthwith captured, and led away by their mother, and in the hush that ensued we could hear the crackling of the Palmyra palms, the rustle of the ragged banana-leaves, and the pleasant play of the fountain. The twilight was already passing into night, and the stars were beginning to show themselves. Most of the party had gone into the house to prepare for dinner, but Miss Clay sat still, her hat on her knee, her head thrown back, as if she enjoyed the rest and peace. Presently her hand was laid gently on my head.

"My poor little Clary," she said, "you must be tired, and hungry, and thirsty; and I, who promised to take care of you, have been thinking my own thoughts, and never heeding you at all. Good little mouse, you shall have some dinner with us."

She rose as she spoke, and moved to the front of the balcony, leaning over as if to listen to the water, then suddenly exclaiming, "Oh, Clary, Clary! do you know it is Christmas Eve?" she covered her face with her hands and sobbed aloud. I could only cry, "Oh don't, dear Miss Clay! Please don't!" but as I instinctively

turned for help, I saw there was still one dark figure in the balcony besides ourselves, and by the light from the room I made out that it was Mr. Collier. He was going in, but paused as I uttered his name, and after a moment's hesitation came towards us, saying very gently, "Can I do any thing for you, Miss Clay? If you could only make me useful—"

In a moment she was quite calm, though tears glittered on her cheeks as she moved towards the light.

"It was only a moment's weakness," she said, as she frankly gave him her hand. "A thought of last Christmas came over me, but I do not forget how much I have to be thankful for still."

I thought Mr. Collier said "God bless you," and added something about wishes of the season; and certainly there were no more tears shed the remainder of that evening. The sweet serenity of her manner, sometimes breaking into playfulness, made me feel at home, in spite of my habitual shyness of Mrs. Farrer, who, attired in her usual magnificence, was even more than usually loud and talkative. To my inexperienced eyes, the dinner seemed a banquet fit for an emperor, and I heard my elders express surprise at its elegance and abundance.

"From what you had said, Louisa," observed Miss Clay to Mrs. Farrer, "I thought we should sit on the

floor with a plate on our laps in proper pic-nic fashion, instead of which you have given us all the luxuries of home."

"Your Parsee fellow must be first rate," said Mr. Dwight. "What do you call him?"

"His name is Nowrojee Nusserawanjee," replied Mrs. Farrer, "but he lived formerly with an English officer, who declared he must call him *John* for shortness, and we have continued the same appellation."

John was in great force that day, proud of the success of his feast, achieved under difficulties, and gratified by the surprise of his master's guests. He wore his usual state dress of crimson silk trowsers and robe of white muslin, with the frightful Parsee head-dress; and a complacent smile flitted now and then over his features. The keen eyes were never still, the bare feet moved hither and thither with silent speed, and it seemed to me, whenever I caught sight of the dark acute face, with its tiny moustache and smoothly-shaven chin, that the Parsee John heard and saw and noted every thing that was said and done by every one at table. Besides the ubiquitous John, there was a servant behind every chair but mine. Some of these were black Portuguese from Goa, with uncovered shaggy heads, and white linen garments of European cut, others, Mussulmen, with scarlet turbans; but all left their

slippers outside the door of the room, and waited on us with bare feet.

As I fell asleep that night on a couch in Miss Clay's room, I heard a sound of many voices singing in the balcony, and fancied I could distinguish hers rising, clear and sweet, above all the rest. The next morning I was awakened by the tap of a fresh rose on my cheek.

"A happy Christmas to you, little Clarissa, and many of them!" said Miss Clay, stooping to kiss me, as I opened my eyes. "It is early, little one, but I thought you would like to come out with me. We will keep our Christmas together as much as we can, Clary."

We were soon out of doors, exploring the neglected garden, and picking such flowers as we could find. Beyond the garden lay waste lands dotted with cactus-plants and milk-trees. The wooded hills beyond looked very tempting, but were too far off for us to reach them on foot. When we returned to the house, we met Mr. Collier with a bunch of gay blossoms he had been gathering on the hill-side, and we soon adorned the room and the breakfast-table with our spoils, which were very lovely, though I heard Miss Clay say to Mr. Collier, "You will call me very unreasonable, but one sprig of holly would be better than all." After breakfast, at which meal the twins appeared, clamouring for

marmalade, upsetting teacups, and allowing very little to be heard besides their own powerful voices, Miss Clay took me into her room, and read and talked to me of the holy themes that belonged to the day. She made me sleep through the sultry afternoon, till the dinner-hour, which was earlier than usual, as Mrs. Farrer meant to drive to the hills afterwards. By and by, when the carriages and horses were announced, I saw Miss Clay speak a few words in private to her father, who patted her cheek and nodded in reply, and then she beckoned to me to follow her to her room, and we stood near the window, hidden by the jalousies, watching the party below. It was a gay scene, backed by the white tents in which Colonel Clay and the other gentlemen, for whom there was no room in the house, passed the night. The fluttering of the canvas startled Colonel Farrer's young horses, and the last sound we heard, as the carriage drove off, was a scream of fear from Mrs. Farrer, loudly echoed by the twins, who sat opposite to her.

"There is no harm done," said Miss Clay, after watching the carriage for a few moments; "the horses are quite quiet now, and every body is gone. What shall we do, Clary? Shall we visit the baby, and then go out into the garden?"

The baby was fretful, and we soon passed out into

the open air. We did not stay by the fountain, where we could hear the chattering of the ayahs from the house, and see the bearers or other servants taking occasional peeps at us, with their usual curiosity; but we took a path that led between rows of deciduous cypresses to a small tank, on whose irregular stone wall we found a seat. My companion exerted herself to amuse me, and told me long stories of her own childhood, and of English ways and scenes. No one disturbed us but the gardener, who came, as on other days, to fill his copper pots at the tank, and walked away with them slung to a piece of wood that he carried on his shoulder. Miss Clay watched him with a look of sadness, and I seemed to catch from her a thought of pity for the poor heathen, to whom all days were alike, to whom even Christmas Day brought no blessing.

“Dear Clary, dear little friend,” she said, in her most caressing tone, taking my face between her hands and kissing it fondly, “I don’t know what I should have done without you to-day. Such a strange Christmas Day! such a strange Sunday! Shall I tell you what it was like last year? I was not very gay then, for I had but lately parted with that little face of which yours so often reminds me; and every time I went to church, I passed a little mound where all of my darling

that was earthly had been laid to rest. Yet I was very happy, Clary. The snow was on the ground, the pure white snow, such as you have never seen. I saw it lying on that little grave as I walked to church with my brother, and beautiful thoughts came into my mind of the land whither the child I had loved was gone so lately. My voice was quite clear and strong when I led the Christmas hymn, though the words had a deeper meaning for me than they had ever had before. But I am bringing shadows over your little face, Clary, with my grave talk. I should rather tell you of our merry trips over the common and into the lanes in search of holly, of our home-comings laden with boughs, so that you might have thought, like Macbeth, that Birnam Wood was moving. We were busy for many days, I and the school-children, making wreaths to hang in the school-room, and, as we grew more skillful, decorations for our pretty little church. Before dark on Christmas Eve our tasks were done, and as Everard and I were spending our evening together, a troop of villagers came to our windows and sang some of the carols I have tried to teach you, Clary. I opened the shutters and put out the candles that I might see better, and there, beyond the spot of red firelight that fell from the window on the snowy lawn, stood the singers, muffled up warmly, and singing with all their

hearts. I could not help joining in their song, and Everard did so too as he stood beside me.

“On Christmas Day (which was Friday,—this being Leap-year, you know, Clary,) we dined with the old Squire of our village and his sister, at their particular request. We had a quiet, peaceful evening, and we lingered as we walked home, to admire the snow lying on the boughs of the tall cedars that were the pride of the Squire’s heart. The next day we gave a feast to the children at the school, and when at last they ceased to eat, we played with them at all sorts of games, and then called in the aid of the village-fiddler and finished with a dance.

“But the great event of the season, Clary, was a grand party at a fine old place called Yeldham. It is such a house as you have never seen,—time-stained and gabled, and half covered with ivy. In the centre of the huge pile is a clock-tower of brick, like the rest of the building, with an arched doorway surrounded with heavy stone masonry. At this great door we stopped on New Year’s Eve, among a crowd of carriages, and mounting a flight of steps, were ushered through a lesser hall, where we left our wraps, into the great hall, which had a vaulted roof like a church, and was on this particular occasion lighted up as brilliantly as Parsee John himself could have lighted it. Crimson curtains hung over

the tall windows on either side, shutting out the wind and the snow ; and on the hearth was a mass of blazing logs that sent flames dancing, and leaping, and roaring up the vast chimney. Great glass chandeliers, like fountains of crystal drops, hung by chains from the roof, and blazed with hundreds of wax lights. Hundreds more were in sconces on the walls. Here and there were suspended trophies composed of armour and banners, with wreaths of holly about them ; and the front of the music-gallery was like a bower of leaves and flowers. You cannot think, Clary, how glad and bright a scene it was. We found plenty of our friends there, and we had scarcely arrived when the musicians began to play, and troop after troop of gay figures danced about the floor.

“I told you the music-gallery was at one end of the hall. At the other was the great dial of the clock, around which the hands were creeping on and on, in spite of all the merriment, till at last they were both very near the figure of twelve. At this time the musicians paused, and there was a general hush of expectation, no one could say why ; but the minute-hand crept on nearer and nearer to the point that would mark the close of the year, and many an eye watched it furtively and nervously. Presently some one began to play on the organ that was at the back of the gallery. At first

the sounds were faint and low, but they swelled louder and deeper, till the oaken roof was filled with their solemn harmony. Every one who heard grew very still and grave, and I clung to my brother's arm, when I found him standing near me, and waited and listened like the rest. Presently we became aware of a figure standing below the clock, so motionless we thought it might have been a statue, only we were sure it had not been there a few minutes before. No one had seen it enter, but all were now observing it eagerly. It was a very old man, clad in garments that might once have been white, but were now stained with toil and travel, and hanging in tatters about him. He had a pilgrim's staff in his hand, and on his back a burden that bent him earthwards with its weight. Long locks of white hair hung about his wrinkled face, and were bound with a fillet, on the front of which was worked in scarlet berries the date of the year just coming to a close. Yes, Clary, it was the poor old dying year come to take leave of us ! No one stirred or spoke, the solemn music played on, and the trembling figure moved, supported by his staff, down the centre of the hall. As he drew near the great door the music died away, and the bell of the clock began slowly to strike the hour. At every stroke the figure drew a step nearer to the door ; but at the sixth stroke the heavy doors flew open, and there entered,

alone and fearless, a toddling child scarcely higher than my hand, dressed in glistening white, as pure as the snow outside, and wearing over its flaxen curls a silver crown, with the date of the coming year in the front, worked in bright beads that shone like icicles. At the same moment, there burst in from the outer hall the sound of a triumphal march. The New Year was coming in, Clary, the young, hopeful, happy year! Face to face for a moment paused the Old Year and the New, and then the old worn figure stooped and kissed the child's round cheek, and passed across the threshold and away out of our sight. And now a crowd came pouring in, and after a moment's confusion, I saw that some one had taken a great shield down from the wall, and laid a lion's skin over it, and placed the child there, as if on a throne; and twelve figures dressed in armour, with holly in their helmets and white scarves across their breasts, came round the child. Four of these had javelins, on the points of which they raised the shield high above their heads, and in a moment a gay procession was moving round the hall. First went a band of musicians in grotesque dresses, and among them two black boys who clanged silver cymbals, and shook the bells on their anklets as they walked; then came the child with his armed guard; and, as they paced along, a troop of girls and boys, dressed in white and crowned

with holly, wove a fantastic dance round and round them. After these came at first only a few of the company, but as the procession advanced, more and more joined it, till we were all pacing round the hall by one impulse, keeping time to the merry march, and joining in the cry that came at each close of the tune, 'God bless the glad New Year!' I could not keep my eyes from the pretty child who sat fearlessly in his triumphal car up above us all. Whether he had been taught or not, I cannot tell, but he perpetually waved his dimpled hands to and fro, as if he were blessing us, and his happy smile was never shaded for a moment. The procession moved round the hall, and then up to the end under the clock, where now there was a throne on which the child was placed. I lost sight of him for a few minutes, when all the company were flocking into the banqueting-room, but after a while I caught sight of the little white figure on a pedestal covered with branches of flowers, in the centre of the long table on which supper was laid out. He still looked gracious and happy, and smiled as his twelve guards clashed their swords above his head and drank to his health. I looked away to answer the question of a neighbour, and when I turned again, the pedestal was vacant. To say the truth, Clary, I think the New Year had been carried away to his little bed. And so ends my story. Did you like it?"

In truth I did, and I said so. It was as good as a fairy-tale to me, whose life had been so quiet and lonely. Meantime, the shadows of night had fallen unperceived around us, and the keen stars were already reflected in the black waters of the tank. We could just distinguish the flats stretching out to our left, and the avenue on the other side, leading to the house. I quite started as I saw a dark figure come out of the avenue towards us, and heard a voice, which however I soon recognized as Mr. Collier's, say, "May I come, or do I interrupt?"

"You may come," Miss Clay answered, rising, "but I suppose it is time for us to go in."

"Mr. Collier always meets us," I remarked, not quite amiably, for I preferred keeping Miss Clay to myself.

He laughed, and begged Miss Clay to stay out a little longer, and she again sat down.

"I left those dreadful children screaming for their tea," he said; "it is hardly safe to go near them till they have been fed. I find it quite a relief to see a quiet child like Clary, though she receives me so coldly."

He talked a little of the ride he had been taking, and then we all fell into silence, and I looked now at the sky, now at the water, now at the mysterious flats stretching away in darkness, when suddenly there

sounded, not very far off, a wild yelling cry, that made me cling trembling to my companions. It rang out again more faintly, and then died away in the distance.

"Oh! what is it? what is it?" I cried, as soon as I could speak. "I hear it at home sometimes, when I am in bed. What is it that makes that dreadful noise?"

"Don't be frightened, Clary," said Mr. Collier; "it is nothing that will hurt you. It is just a pack of hungry jackals fighting for a dead crow, or some such tit-bit. They would be more afraid of you than you are of them, I dare say."

"It is a horrible sound, nevertheless," Miss Clay observed, with a shudder, "I was fancying only just now, in the brief twilight, that the flats there looked like an English common, that the cactus-plants might be furze, and the low bushes heather, and that bees and butterflies would be hovering there in the morning, and grey rabbits peeping out of their sandy holes. I never thought of jackals fighting over their prey. Come, Clary, you are shaking still; let us go in."

Mr. Collier took me in his arms and carried me to the house. As he put me on my feet in the verandah, a little four-footed hairy creature brushed past me, and I started aside in great alarm, recollecting, in the next moment, that it could only be a poor little mangoos I

had seen there in the morning, kept for the purpose of destroying snakes. On entering the lower room, we found the twins at tea.

"This is a treat," observed Mr. Collier; "I remember that when I used to go to a wild-beast show, when I was a boy, I always paid twopence extra to see the animals fed. Here we are admitted gratis."

"For shame!" cried Miss Clay. "I will not let you speak in such a way of my little cousins."

"I meant no harm," he answered, with mock gravity. "Clary, do you join the menagerie? I beg pardon! Do you drink tea with Miss Clay's little cousins?"

"No, indeed, she does not," Miss Clay answered, laughing; "Clary is my own little friend, and she stays by me always."

"Happy Clary!" he ejaculated; and then we all three went up-stairs. Tea was ready there also, and the lamps burned brightly, while their glass drops tinkled with a pleasant sound that betrayed the presence of the evening breeze. There was much discussion over the meal as to the morrow's plans, but all was settled at last, and every one promised to be ready to set forth at the earliest glimpse of dawn. After I was in bed, with the mosquito-net safely over me, Miss Clay sang me softly to sleep with Christmas hymns, and so ended the earliest Christmas Day I can remember.



CHAPTER VI.

GORABUNDER AND ELEPHANTA.

WE were all astir betimes the next morning, snatching a hasty breakfast before we left the house, and then the whole party, the moon-faced baby excepted, proceeded in carriages or on horseback some two or three miles to the bank of the broad river or strait (for it is really an arm of the sea), beyond the little town of Tannah, where the silk-weavers were already at their looms. Two boats were awaiting us. In the first embarked Mrs. Farrer with her husband and children, and Major Conway; in the second were Colonel and Miss Clay, the Dwights, Mr. Collier, and my small self.

Our vessels were bunder-boats, with good-sized cabins, on the roofs of which each party proceeded to establish themselves on cushions ; and we were towed by a little steam-tug, so as to be independent of wind and tide. To my recollection that day's voyage seems a vision of fairy-land. Wooded hills sweeping softly down to the water's edge, valleys rich in marvellous Eastern foliage, here and there the ruin of an old Portuguese church peeping among the trees, cliffs topped with nodding palms ; all these succeeded each other as we passed along ; and we met native boats, with their great white sails spread, carrying loads of wood down to Tannah. Often my companions roused the echoes with songs, and I lay watching and listening in a state of dreamy happiness not to be described. But such bliss could not last for ever. Before we reached our destination, we had been glad to take refuge from the sun in the cabin, and were fain to survey the view at a disadvantage through the cabin-windows. We landed at a village opposite to Bassein, called Gorabunder, and here we found two or three palanquins waiting to convey the ladies and children up a very steep hill, to the building in which we were to pass the following night. This was no other than a church, built by the Portuguese, and now, used occasionally, alas ! only as a dwelling. Miss Clay took me into her palanquin, and

our bearers, with many a grunt, conveyed us up a steep ascent of ninety-three steps, and landed us on a platform in front of the church. We were glad to hurry from the blazing light and heat there, into the shelter of the building, which had been swept and made ready for our reception. John had made his arrangements two days before, and he was already unpacking and laying out a meal for us on a rude table, that, with a few chairs, formed the furniture of our strange dining-hall. This was in the body of the church. In the chancel, shut out by a heavy door, were several camp-beds for the ladies and children of the party. The gentlemen were to sleep in tents on the platform outside, but these were not pitched till dusk, for the sake of coolness.

There was no lack of good things to eat, and even the twins were satisfied at last, and sent to lie down and sleep. Quite early in the afternoon, Colonel Farrer said it was time to proceed, or there would not be light enough to see the wonders of Bassein. A noisy discussion followed, as to who should go and who should stay. Mrs. Farrer declared she knew nothing about Bassein, and did not care to go, and Mrs. Dwight said she had seen so many ruins in her time, that she did not wish to see any more. Major Conway took his pipe to one of the chambers that were on each side of the building,—choosing, naturally,

one of those to the north,—and was heard of no more till evening. I heard Mr. Collier advise Miss Clay not to take me, and I saw she did not like leaving me behind, though she declined the offer he made to stay and take care of me. At last it was arranged that I should be committed to the charge of Mrs. Dwight, and meantime strive to take a nap, as the twins were doing; and then the expedition set forth.

In the cool of the evening, when the twins were awake, and, refreshed by their slumbers, were rushing violently into every nook and corner of the church, while their mother watched them admiringly, Mrs. Dwight and I stole out to the platform and sat down to look about us and enjoy the breeze. I did not much like my companion, who had no notion how to talk to children, though she had two or three of her own; but they were ~~in England~~, and had left her as mere babies. At first she attempted a little conversation with me as we sat together, but my replies only elicited the remark that I was “an odd little fish,” or “an old-fashioned little quiz,” and she soon left me to my own thoughts, and sang softly to herself in a voice singularly rich and sweet, to which I listened with pleasure, while feeling myself free to look about me. Child as I was, I enjoyed the great beauty of the view. Wooded hills were around us, with here and there a building—in one spot

the ruin of a Portuguese convent—peeping from the dense foliage; the water rolling by, broad and deep; and, on its opposite bank, the softly undulating hills gradually sinking to a long low point, on which we could just distinguish some of the towers of Bassein, while the bunder-boat and steamer were moored close by, waiting for our friends. Over all this loveliness shone the glory of a tropical sunset. Only too quickly the sun dropped below the horizon, and it was night. We lingered till we saw, in the starlight, the gleam of the returning sail which had been spread to aid the speed of the steamer. At this sight Mrs. Dwight stopped her singing, and went in to tell Mrs. Farrer the news, but I stayed, half-frightened at the solitude, till Miss Clay herself was beside me.

On this day, Parsee John achieved his greatest triumph. He had contrived to suspend cocoa-nut lamps from the sides of the building, so as to give quite a festal air to the old place. Most of the provisions spread on the table were cold, but there was abundance of coffee sending forth its scented steam; and a large bowl of curry, with another of rice, only waited a signal to be put on the table. It was a cheerful supper, and not the less so because the exhausted twins had already been sent to bed. Now and then, when our merriment was loud, an echo seemed to come from behind the

door that shut them from our sight ; but, after a time, Mrs. Farrer, who went to visit her darlings, announced that they were happily asleep.

I noticed that Miss Clay looked tired and spoke little, and, as soon as possible, she rose from the table, and calling me, took leave of the party for the night. We peeped through the open door, and saw people busily pitching two little tents on the platform, and then we went softly into the place where we were to sleep. There lay the twins with dishevelled hair, unconscious of time and place, and unheeding the voices and clatter so audible to us.

"This makes me feel very sad, Clary," Miss Clay said, as she helped me to undress ; "this ruined church in the midst of all these poor heathens, and we making merry where prayers were wont to be said. I feel very guilty, Clary."

"You have not been merry," I said, laying my head on her shoulder, as I stood beside the bed on which she had seated herself.

"No, nor you, Clary, I suspect," she said, smiling ; "I am afraid you did not like my leaving you behind to-day, but I did not know what perils we might encounter among the ruins, and I knew you would be safe here. As it was, we only saw one cobra, which Mr. Collier killed with his stick."

"And what else did you see?" I asked.

"Ruins, Clary. Ruins of convents and churches, and houses and tombs; and all intermixed with palms and banyan-trees and lovely creepers. It is a strange, sad place. The Portuguese took it in 1534 from the King of Guzerat, and the Mahrattas took it from the Portuguese in 1739—(there is a little bit of historical information, Clary, which Mr. Collier gave me to-day!) It is a city of the Dead."

Meantime, there was a sound of movement in the church, and presently Mrs. Farrer and Mrs. Dwight joined us; the outer doors of the building swung heavily to, as the gentlemen passed out to their tents on the platform; and all became comparatively quiet. I said my prayers, with a strange sense of being in a church, and when I fell asleep, visions flitted before me of the Portuguese chapel at Bombay as I had seen it through the open door, the shrine adorned with crowded lights, and a host of worshippers on the altar-steps, half veiled by a cloud of incense. In the middle of the night I woke and gazed round me with bewilderment and fear, not remembering at first where I was. Strange shadows came and went on the wall as the lamp flickered in the breeze, the tramp of a whole army of rats resounded in the domed roof overhead, ghostly bats flitted to and fro above my bed, and mysterious noises came from without,

mingled with the murmur of the water. In another moment I should have screamed, but the kind face of Miss Clay bent over me and whispered a few reassuring words, and I soon fell asleep again.

We were all up at dawn, drinking hot coffee and eating biscuits; and, after a lingering look from the platform, we descended the hill to the landing-place, where our boats awaited us. There was some little delay, of which Miss Clay took advantage to make a hasty sketch from the foot of the hill, and then we embarked as on the previous day, establishing ourselves on the roof of the cabin. For some time all went prosperously with us. New beauties in the scenery were ever coming to light, new songs were sung, new stories told; but when we were yet several miles above Tannah, we were startled by an unearthly scream from the Farrers' boat, which preceded us, as on the previous day. Abruptly pausing in the very middle of a song, we looked eagerly for the cause of the cry, and saw what I at first supposed to be five or six cocoa-nuts bobbing up and down in the river. Something white floating near them next attracted my attention, and soon I perceived that one of the twins had fallen into the water, and that the cocoa-nuts were the heads of the boatmen who had jumped in to rescue her. A glance at the other boat showed Colonel Farrer supporting his wife,

who continued to scream hysterically and toss her arms aloft, till she was in imminent peril of following her child's example. The boatmen, who were nearly as much at home in the water as on land, had seized the unlucky Rose just abreast of our boat. In a moment Miss Clay had slipped from the cabin-roof, and was standing on the boat's deck with outstretched arms, bidding the men give the child to her. Mr. Collier was beside her, in time to throw a shawl round the child's dripping form as Miss Clay took it, and hurried into the cabin. Mr. Collier shouted to Colonel Farrer that Rose was "all right," indeed her own lungs soon gave loud evidence of the fact. I asked to be lifted down to the cabin, and I saw how tenderly Miss Clay soothed the child's terror, and, divesting her of her wet garments, wrapped the little thing in a cloak, and sat the rest of the voyage nursing and singing to her. Mr. Collier did his part, giving spoonfuls of wine and talking in Hindustani, of which language Miss Clay still knew but little. The clothes were soon dried in the sun, and ready to be put on before we landed at Tannah, where we had rather an oppressive scene, as Mrs. Farrer rushed to embrace her child, and Rose, who was getting feverish and uneasy as the heat of the day increased, received her mother's passionate caresses very unamiably.

The silk-looms were at work as we passed the pretty little town of Tannah, with its English church; and within half-an-hour we reached home and found the baby flourishing. Mr. Collier took Rose from Miss Clay and carried her to a couch, where she lay flushed and restless, showing no particular desire for any thing but to keep Miss Clay near her. Colonel Clay had remained in the porch, giving orders for the carriage that was to convey us back to Bombay in the evening. When he came into the lower room, he approached his daughter and said, "I have told them to bring the carriage at four o'clock, Anne. Will that suit you?"

Mrs. Farrer looked up with an expression of dismay.

"Oh, Anne!" she cried, "surely you don't mean to leave me with this poor child on my hands, after I have been so ill and agitated? And after poor baby has been so ill too?"

Miss Clay looked at her father, who hesitated a moment, and then said,

"I will wait for you, Anne, if you wish it, till to-morrow morning. That is the utmost I can do. Farrer must go to-night, I know."

So Colonel Farrer rode away, promising to let my parents know why I did not make my appearance. Mrs. Farrer said her nerves were sadly shattered, and she could scarcely move from the sofa all the evening. Mrs.

Dwight was tired, and went early to her room, so the care of little Rose devolved entirely on Miss Clay, who looked more in need of rest than any one. Her father commented on her pale cheeks, and Mr. Collier fretted and fumed, made severe remarks on the selfishness of human nature, and shot many a fierce glance towards the insensible Mrs. Farrer. Mr. Dwight and Major Conway loudly triumphed in the sagacity which had led them to prognosticate that the presence of the twins would lead to mischief in our expedition, and the evening was altogether uncomfortable. When I opened my eyes in the night, I saw Miss Clay, who had not undressed, passing to and fro between her room and an adjoining one where Rose had been placed with her ayah; but in the morning, when she called me to get up, she looked smiling and happy, and told me the child was well and in a delicious sleep.

When we were dressed, and had taken the breakfast which John sent to our room, Miss Clay and I went to take leave of Mrs. Farrer, whom we found sitting up in her bed, wrapped in muslin and blue ribbons, sipping a cup of coffee.

"Well, good-bye, Anne," she said; "I'm sure I don't know what I'm to do without you, for I feel all shaken to pieces. You may think yourself happy that you're not all made up of nerves as I am. I believe

I've a double allowance of them. I quite envied you yesterday, so calm and unmoved, when that poor child was actually drowning. Good-bye, little Grantham," she continued, holding out one finger, which, in my indignation, I appeared not to see. "I shall be at home on Saturday, Anne, and I hope I shall find you in your old quarters."

I did not hear Miss Clay's answer, but as I walked down-stairs holding her hand, I felt that I was very glad to part with Mrs. Farrer, and that I regretted no one but Mr. Collier. To my surprise we found him below, ready to go with us to Bombay, and I took my seat in the carriage beside him and opposite to my dear friend and her father, with a light and happy heart.

"So much for a party of pleasure!" exclaimed Colonel Clay, as we drove from the door. "Every one of us, even that child, is glad it is over."

"Nay, sir," said Mr. Collier, "don't be unjust. We really have had a great deal of enjoyment, and if the menagerie had been left at home, we should have had nothing to complain of. I mean," he added, as Miss Clay held up a warning finger, "if those dear little cousins of Miss Clay's had been left behind by their doting mother, our trip would have been a success."

"Perhaps," Colonel Clay replied, shrugging his shoulders; "but I am too old to enjoy such things, I

suppose. I did not know you were such a child-hater, Collier."

"Oh dear no, I deny the soft impeachment," exclaimed Mr. Collier; "I adore childhood in the abstract—I like well-behaved children uncommonly. Now, here is Miss Grantham, though whether she really is a child or only a small elderly lady I have never felt quite sure. If the former, however, I trust she will speak a good word for me, as, though cold in manner to me when I appear at unwelcome times, she often shows herself gracious and friendly. We are good friends, Clary, are we not?"

"Once I did not like you at all," I answered, "but I shall always like you now very much."

"And whence this happy change of sentiment, Clary?" he asked; "why do you like me now?"

"Because you are so kind to Miss Clay," I said. My answer proved so diverting to him and to Colonel Clay, that I was quite abashed, and could not hold up my head for some time. When I was sufficiently composed to attend to the conversation again, I found Colonel Clay was talking of the house he intended to take, and of his desire to move into it before the following Saturday.

"Oh! are you going to move?" I cried, in alarm.

"Only a little way, Clary," Miss Clay said; "only

to the house with the pretty mimosa-trees just opposite to yours. You will be able to come to me still every morning, and as my papa will not be able to get away to the hills during the hot weather, and your papa told me he was going to remain on Malabar Hill, we shall be neighbours for a long time to come."

This was joyful news indeed, and it gave me spirit to laugh at Mr. Collier's jokes, even when they were a little at my own expense. They were too kind ever to wound me. I even helped him to teach Miss Clay the names of some of the trees we passed; the varieties of palm; the peepul with its hanging suckers, that looked like shabby frayed rope tending earthwards to take root; the tamarinds with lovely light foliage; and many another now forgotten. In return, I asked the meaning of the occasional stone crosses by the wayside, and was told they were relics of the times when Salsette belonged to the Portuguese. Much more was told me of the history of the country, but I fear it soon passed from my treacherous memory.

It was pleasant to be clasped in my father's arms again, and to see my mother's dear face brighten at sight of me. Even Mrs. Armstrong said she was glad I had come home; and my cat came purring round my feet, as if she too desired to make me welcome.

Before the following Saturday, Colonel and Miss

Clay were settled in their new home. Like all the other gentlemen around us, Colonel Clay went daily to his office in the fort, and his daughter, who still made her mourning an excuse for living in much seclusion, again devoted her mornings to me, and a part of every afternoon to my mother. The pretty pictures that had adorned the little bungalow when Miss Clay was Mrs. Farrer's guest, were now hung on the walls of a room screened off from the large drawing-room of the new house; the gazelle was tethered near the windows, and pots of lovely flowers were ranged the whole length of the verandah. Even here we were not always safe from intrusion. Sometimes when we turned from the piano, we found a Bohra, or pedler, established in the verandah, with a strange medley of wares spread around him,—Cashmere scarves, macassar oil, needles, soap, calico, and a thousand things besides,—not to be discouraged by all Miss Clay's attempts to assure him she wanted nothing, and asking extravagantly ridiculous prices, which rapidly diminished, in the hope of attracting her notice and softening her indifference. Often it was a store of the pretty inlaid ivory and sandal-wood articles manufactured in the country, that was laid out for our inspection; or agates from Surat; or books in all languages, bought up at a sale; or muslin embroidery brought by some picturesque old

bearded Jew from Calcutta. The interruptions were not always convenient, but they were often amusing.

About the end of January, Miss Clay invited my father and me to join in an expedition to Elephanta. I had often seen the double-headed green island from the shore, and I was charmed at the thought of exploring it. We had a large open boat, and our party consisted of the Clays, Colonel and Mrs. Farrer (not the twins this time), Mr. Collier, and ourselves. The wind was fair, and filled our great white sail as we crossed, but the tide would not allow the boat to go close in, so the boatmen jumped into the water and carried us on shore in a chair, without further misadventure than a threatening of hysterics from Mrs. Farrer, when her bearer's foot slipped on a stone. Colonel Clay offered her his arm and led the way, and the rest of the party followed slowly up the grassy path, winding among the trees to the celebrated caves. Miss Clay was like a child herself as she and I picked up pods of tamarinds that lay under the trees, and enjoyed the pleasant sharpness of the fruit, or plucked handfuls of a lovely white bell-shaped creeper with purple eye, that grew in profusion over the bushes. She had not been long enough in India to dread that every stick in the path might prove a reptile; or, at any rate, on this evening she had forgotten all such fears. We reached the

caves only too soon, and my companions were all engrossed with the carved weird figures on the walls, which half frightened me. I preferred looking through the opening, and seeing, below festoons of leaves and flowers, the wooded height of Caranja and the blue sea. After a while, we all sat down in front of the cave to wait for the darkness, a proceeding I could not at all understand, for I longed to leave behind me that fearful place, with all its heathenish images, which yet had such a fascination for me, that I could not help looking over my shoulder now and then, as I nestled down between my father and Miss Clay.

Some one suggested that we wanted some amusement to pass away the time, and Miss Clay was asked to sing.

"It is not easy," she replied, "to think of a song suited to this place, but there is one that I believe may do, if I can remember the words. It has the merit of being dismal enough for any thing."

She began in a low voice, that soon swelled to its usual clear ringing sound; the air was wild, and in a minor key, and Mr. Collier joined in occasionally, especially in the refrain.

BALLAD:

"A face is at the window, sorrowful and white,
At the Castle window, all the livelong night ;

A mournful voice is sounding over lawn and lea,
'Come, my bonny children, come again to me!
Down the stormy valley, o'er the gloomy sea,
My sons, my bonny darlings, come again to me!'

"In the stormy valley, down below the hill,
Lies one bonny darling, cold, and pale, and still;
The raven croaks beside him, the rain is falling fast,
The bare and ghostly larches quail and shiver in the
blast.

He cannot hear the wailing that sounds o'er lawn and
lea,
'My sons, my bonny darlings, come again to me!'

"Is this a broken flower that lies along the sand,
Borne by the angry breakers, and tossed but now to
land?

Of all the bonny children, the bonniest is there,
All pale and cold and silent, with sea-weeds in his hair.
The wailing cry is heard not beside the gloomy sea,
'My sons, my bonny darlings, come again to me!'

"Swirls the bitter night-wind o'er the battle-plain,
Above the crowds of dying, and o'er the heaps of slain.
It stirs the curls that cluster around a golden head,
The first among the fearless, and first among the dead.

No more to hear the wailing that sounds o'er lawn and
lea,

'My sons, my bonny darlings, come again to me!'

"Still the face is watching, sorrowful and white,
At the castle window, all the livelong night;
Still the voice is sounding over lawn and lea,
'Come, my bonny children, come again to me!
Down the stormy valley, o'er the gloomy sea,
My sons, my bonny darlings, come again to me!'"

The mere words can give very little idea of the effect of the song, sung so sweetly, with the shadows falling over the scenery outside, and the gloom deepening in the "chamber of imagery" behind us. We were all silent for awhile when it ceased, and every one else started when Mrs. Farrer spoke.

"Really, Anne," she said, "you ought to know better than to sing such a song. I never heard any thing so dreary in all my life. As if it wasn't enough to send one into a quiver to sit here within reach of those frightful faces, but you must needs tell us of a horrible white one looking out of a castle window!"

Mr. Collier looked at my father, and groaned; but Miss Clay only laughed, and begged to be forgiven.

The daylight was nearly gone now. We could no

longer distinguish the little red and yellow fruit on a large tree nearly opposite to the mouth of the cave, though on our first arrival it had looked so bright, that we might have thought the branches were laden with jewels, like the trees in Aladdin's magical garden. So we rose and turned towards the cave. In a moment the whole interior was illuminated with dazzling blue-lights, that showed every face and figure of the strange carvings, far more distinctly than daylight had done. At the farther end were the three gigantic faces, the centre one calm and grand, but all seeming to me so stern and awful, that I was thankful when the lights died away, and we left the cave and walked down in the moonlight to the boat. The men took to their oars, and rowed us home, all being very silent; and I watched the water that dropped from the oars and glistened like pearls as the moonbeams touched them, until I fell asleep, and dreamt of Miss Clay's song.



CHAPTER VII.

FEVER DREAMS.

THE day after our trip to Elephanta, I felt strangely tired, and complained of headache, so I stayed all day in my mother's room, lying very still, and scarcely heeding who came or went. After this, there came a period of confusion, for I had a sharp attack of fever. I recollect opening my eyes one night, and seeing my father writing at a table in my room. I watched him without speaking; and presently there came trooping in through the open door, about a dozen of little figures, who ranged themselves round my bed. My father went on writing, and did not seem to see the strange visitors, so

I lay and watched them without speaking. They all had close-fitting dresses, of yellow colour, with black spots, and their grotesque faces wore a constant grin. They stood "mopping and mowing" for some time, and then suddenly each one expanded till he became a giant, and his head touched the ceiling, and the next minute each contracted again to a dwarfish size; and this performance was repeated again and again. By and by they left the bedside, and ranged themselves in a row, still without a sound, for a game at leapfrog, such as I had seen represented in one of my English picture-books. This was so diverting, with the constant changes in the size of the performers, that I laughed aloud, and my father left his writing, and came to see what caused my amusement.

"Don't stand just there, please, papa," I cried, "I want to see that poor little dwarf jump. Oh! what a shame! The other one grew up into a giant just as the poor little thing was taking the leap, but he has gone over, all the same. Well done, little fellow! Did you ever see such fun, papa?" and I tried to clap my hands, which, for some reason, seemed almost too heavy for me to lift. My father did not seem to share my amusement, or to care to look at the game that was still going on round and round the room.

"You must try to be quiet, Clary," he said, very

gravely. "I will darken the room, and you must shut your eyes, and try to go to sleep."

"But I sha'n't be able to see the merry little men," I cried piteously, as he carried the light into the adjoining room.

"You have seen enough for to-night," he replied, when he returned; and sitting down beside me, tried to soothe my excitement, crooning a nursery song that at length sent me to sleep.

Another evening, I know not how long afterwards, I opened my eyes, and saw some one sitting near my bed, reading. I could not mistake the sweet face, and the pretty light hair; it was Miss Clay. I watched her, without caring to speak, and for a long time there was neither sound nor movement in the room; but by and by something dark peeped slyly in at the open door. On and on it crept, a hairy beast, with pointed ears, cruel eyes, and large white teeth in its half-opened mouth. After it came another, and another, till the room was filled with the fearful creatures. I knew what they were; I remembered the cry we had heard as we sat by the tank in Salsette, and the animal I had once seen prowling about the flats in the early morning, when I was with my father. It was a herd of jackals that had come into my very room, round the bed where I lay! Still Miss Clay read on, unheed-

ing, till I uttered a shriek that brought her at once to my side.

"Hush, my little Clary," she said gently, as she bent over me, after drawing aside the mosquito-net; "don't frighten your poor mamma. What is the matter, my child?"

I flung my arms round her neck, and cried, "Why did you let them come in? Why don't you drive them away? Look, look! they will come on my bed presently! They will make that horrid noise that you said you didn't like! Why do you ask me what is the matter, when those horrid jackals are all round my bed?"

"Poor little Clary!" she said, kissing me. "I will try to put every thing right for you, but you know I can't do any thing while you hold me so fast. Now, that is right; lie down and shut your eyes, and I will see what I can do."

She darkened the room, as my father had done, bathed my head with some cool mixture, and sang softly, till I fell asleep. But my adventures for this night were not over yet, for I had a dream so strangely vivid, that I awoke from it with a cry of terror, and it was long before my kind friend could soothe me. I thought I was once more in the great cave of Elephanta, and the keen blue light was shining into every

hole and crevice, and on all the monstrous figures. But even as I looked, it seemed as if life came into all the images; some moved their many hands, some opened and shut their stony eyes. Worst of all were the three gigantic faces. The fierce one gazing on a cobra, wreathed its brows into a yet more angry frown, and the cobra lifted its crest menacingly; but it was when the lips of the central face seemed to move, that my terror reached its climax, and I woke with a cry that brought my father, as well as Miss Clay, to my side. It was a long time before they could quiet me, and when at last I promised to lie still and try to sleep, I heard my father say, "It was an unlucky excursion for poor Clary."

"Yes," Miss Clay answered, "I suppose we ought not to have let her go to sleep in the boat."

Her words reminded me of the quiet row home, the pearly drops glistening in the moonlight, and the regular beat of the oars; and thinking of all these, I slept again.

I know not how many days had passed after this, when one evening I woke and looked for one of my usual watchers,—my father, Miss Clay, or Mrs. Armstrong,—and saw a most unexpected figure in their accustomed seat. I rubbed my eyes and looked again. There could be no doubt of the fact; my old friend Tom

Stubbs, with a pair of huge horn spectacles on his nose, and a newspaper in his hand, was the only person in the room besides myself.

"Tom!" I exclaimed in amazement; "Tom Stubbs!" He laid down the paper, and came to me without a sound, for he had taken off his boots and left them in the passage outside. There was his round reddish-brown face looking down on me with such a comical air of perplexity, that I could not help laughing.

"Ah! missy, laugh away," he said, "I daresay you think its a queer sort of nurse-tender you've got to-night; but I heard you was ill, missy, and so I asked for a week's leave and came here, and begged and prayed of your pa to let me help take care of ye, and so at last he said Yes. So he turned in about an hour ago to get a good sleep, and I promised to call him if he was wanted."

"Don't call him," I replied; "I don't want him, if you'll come close and talk to me."

"I was to be careful about that, missy," he said, "and not let you talk too much."

"Can you sing, Tom?" I asked, as he took a seat beside my bed.

His whole frame shook with laughter, though he made no noise.

"Sing, missy? Bless you!" he said, as soon as he

could speak; "I can sing out fast enough in a gale of wind, but as to singing of songs and such like, why it didn't form no part of my edication, and if I was to tip you a stave of one of my sea-ditties, such as 'Hearts of Oak,' or the 'Roast Beef of Old England,' I should make such a noise that I should blow the roof off or bring the walls down. No, missy, my voice is all very well in a nor-wester aboard ship, but it don't do ashore."

"Then you must tell me a story, Tom," I pleaded. "You used to tell me very nice stories at the light-house, so tell me one now."

"I'm sure I shall be proud, missy. There, let me toss up your pillow first;" and the rough sailor did so as skilfully and gently as a woman, then took off his spectacles, and began his tale.

"In course, missy," he said, "I know better than to be thinking of such a thing here, but it don't feel natural to be spinning a yarn without the help of a pipe in my mouth. A whiff of good baccy helps a man on wonderful, so you must grant your pardon if I'm a bit stupid. What you said just now, missy, about me singing, put me in mind of that Mounseer I once spoke to ye about, him as went to Labrador curoosity-hunting. He'd have had to go farther than that, missy, to find a greater curoosity than himself! He was a middle-sized active-made man, with a long brown

beard and moustachios, and a steady look in his eye, as if nothing would daunt him,—and nothing did, as ever I see. But he was the fellow for singing, missy, and for playing of the fiddle! I believe he loved his fiddle best of any thing. He had a waterproof bag to put it in, and he used to strap it on his back when he was going ashore, and when he'd a spare minute, out it 'ud come, and he'd play like a wild creature. Sometimes it was a sad moanin' sort of tune, that would make your blood run cold, then all on a sudden he'd change it to such a dancin' merry music that you couldn't sit still. And then he'd sing to it so as you could almost understand the words, in spite of their being in his own queer outlandish tongue. 'Tom,' says he to me one day, as I was rowing him ashore, and he sat in the stern-sheets smokin' his everlasting pipe as he steered the boat, 'Tom,' says he, 'my pipe is my shild, that I love tender; but my fiddle, Tom, my fiddle is my wife, my joy, my pride! best of all, dearest of all!' I couldn't help laughing, though I was used to his strange talk. Those Mounseers have a way with them, more like a play-actor than a plain, quiet Englishman, so I never was much surprised, except one day, and I'll tell ye how that was, missy. I went ashore one morning with him on the coast of Labrador. A sweet pretty place it was, with dwarf woods of fir

and birch coming down to the shore of an inlet, and a sparkling river leaping down over some black rocks at the further end. We landed, sent the boat back, saying we'd make a signal when we wanted her to fetch us, and then we climbed up the bank and looked about us. Mounseer had his fiddle on his back and his pipe in his mouth, a fishing-rod in his hand, and all his pockets filled out with tin boxes for flowers, and bottles for insects, a hammer for chipping of stones, and all manner of out-of-the-way things. On his head he wore a straw hat with a blue gauze veil tied to it, in case the mosquitoes should trouble him. However, the pipe generally kept them off best. I carried some provisions for our dinner, an air-gun of Mounseer's, a game-bag, and some fishing-tackle. Atop of the bank we found some sloping ground with short grass, and we trudged across it till we came to a lake as clear and blue as you could wish to see. We stopped for Mounseer to set some fishing-lines, and then on we went again, through a little wood where the young spruces smelt very sweet in the hot sun. We had some trouble to force our way along, the bushes grew so thick, but Mounseer found a new kind of ugly brown beetle about as big as a fly, so he was as happy as a king, and whenever he took his pipe out of his mouth, he sang away like any bird. By noon we'd gone a long way inland, and we'd got two or

three more insects, and a bird, and a couple of fish, so we sat down to rest and to eat the dinner we'd brought with us. I can tell you, missy, we were glad enough to sit down, and it was a pleasant sort of place. I've seen some pretty carpets in my time, up the Persian Gulf, nearly as soft as a bed need be, and made up of all manner of bright colours; but, bless ye, missy, they was nothing for softness or for brightness to the bank I saw that day in Labrador. The little flowers perked up their pretty heads among the grass and the mosses, and I don't suppose you ever did see such mosses as they, missy. Some were all in branches tipped with red, like coral, and some was all blue and bright like steel. Mounseer laid his pipe down on the ground beside him, and ate his dinner like a hero, and then he said, 'Now, Tom, we will have music. Such a day, such a scene, such a lovely brown beetle, such a rare small spider, they all must have one hymn of triumph;' and so he took out the fiddle and played and sang for half an hour. Then he put his pipe in his mouth, and we took up our goods and began to walk back by a fresh path. It was not an easy way to go, for there was black bog here and there; however, we came at last to the lake again, and here we stopped, and found some fish on the lines and a queer insect in the beetle-trap, so Mounseer was delighted, and said he

must have a swim in the lake, and I was to go over the hill and make a signal to the yacht to send a boat ashore for us. It was a hard pull up the hill, and took me a long time. Once I looked back and saw Mounseer swimming about like a fish, then I toiled on again and got to the top of the steep pitch. But the men aboard the schooner were looking for us lower down, and they never saw my signals, so I was obliged to go on ever so much farther before they would heed me. At last I saw the boat push off from the yacht, and then I began to wonder what had become of Mounseer. There was no sign of him far or near, and by this time it was getting late in the afternoon, and heavy clouds were threatening from the west. There was nothing for it but to go and look for him, for he was just as likely as not, to forget where he was and all about it; so, after resting for a spell, I began plodding up the hill again. Well, missy, I got to the top at last, and there I did see a wonderful sight. There was the lake in course, where I'd left it, and on the further bank there was Mounseer, dressed, and with his pipe in his mouth, sitting under a bush and playing away like mad on his fiddle,—but beyond him, missy, the country was on fire! The flames came dancing on, closer and closer, over the dry bog-grass and moss and bushes, driven by the westerly wind, and

sending up clouds of smoke. But Mounseer never heard or saw any thing of it; his fiddle was all the world to him then.

"I've seen a pictur'," continued Tom, "of a king—I think his name was Nebuchadnezzar, for I know it began with a N, missy,—playing on a fiddle, with roses on his head, and the city of Carthage a-blazing away in the distance. This pictur' reminded me of Mounseer the minute I saw it, only, you see, he had his pipe, and he hadn't no roses, only his old straw hat. Well, missy, I knew 'twas no sort of use to shout, so I ran down over the hill, tumbling among the stones and bushes, and reached Mounseer before the fire caught the bushes behind him. He didn't see me till I was right upon him, and then he woke up, and I turned him round and showed him the fire. He put up his fiddle, took his boxes and fishing-lines, and came with me, talking all the time, and thanking me for coming for him.

"'Good Tom!' he said, patting my shoulder; 'but for you there might be one big roast goose more in the world. I saw not, I heard not. Good Tom!'

"'Never mind, Mounseer,' I said, only come on out of the smoke;' and at last I got him down to the boat, just as the flames were coming crackling up the hill among the young spruces that had smelt so sweet in the

morning. As we were going off in the boat, he cried out, 'My brown beetle, Tom! Is my brown beetle safe?'

"I felt a little bothered with him and his beetle, and so I said, 'O yes, Mounseer, it's all safe,' and then I muttered to myself, 'What's a brown beetle?' Mounseer heard me, though I didn't mean he should.

"'Tom,' he said, speaking very sharp, 'you are one stupid, one ignorant, one lout! You know no more than one pig.'

"I was hurt he should speak like that to me, so I said, 'You needn't say that to me, Mounseer, just this minute, when I'm puffing away like a porpoise with saving the life of your fiddle, if I didn't save your own.'

"'Forgive me, Tom,' he said, 'I was one pig myself to speak so. You shall forgive me, brave Tom, you shall give me your hand; and to-morrow you shall see in my cabin such things as shall make you leap for joy.'

"When he got on the schooner's deck he looked back at the shore, and saw the flames flickering over the hill-side, where they found so much wood that they made a grand show. Mounseer took his pipe out of his mouth, and said to me very solemn, 'Brave Tom, whence came all that fire?'

"'I think, Mounseer,' I said, 'a spark must have

fallen out of your pipe, when you laid it down beside you while you ate your dinner. The ground was damp and boggy there, so it took some time to kindle; that's my notion.'

"'Brave Tom, so it must be. But we should have a march of triumph for the flame-king.'

"And so he took out his fiddle again, and played as quick as his fingers could go; but presently the fire had burnt down to the shore, and died out for want of fuel, so Mounseer stopped a minute, and said, 'We should have a lament, Tom, for the trees and the flowers;' and then he played the dismallest tune that ever I heard, like the wind in a keyhole, so that I begged and prayed of him to stop; and he laughed, and went into his cabin.

"Next day he called me when I was off duty. 'Brave Tom,' says he, 'you ask, What is one brown beetle? Come, and you shall see: and he showed me through a glass the different parts of the little insect. There was the beautifullest gauzy wings, missy, folding in under the brown sort of sheath; there was his little eye and his little tongue; and last of all, there was the joint of his leg.

"'Look at that,' says Mounseer, skipping round the table; 'see how perfect, and then think how clumsy, how rough, how awkward will seem all human work, all

human machine! Brave Tom, never say any more, "What is a brown beetle?" See how the great God cared to make it so perfect, so fit for where He put it. Ah! beautiful, beautiful!"

"Well, missy, I think I was more respectful to dumb things ever after; but I never see a beetle, brown or black, without thinking of Mounseer and his fiddle, and his wonderful glass."

"What became of him, Tom?" I inquired.

"He died, missy, not long after. He caught a cold looking after creatures, and he was sick a long time. The man that nursed him told me that the day Mounseer died, he would be dressed and sit by the window, just the same as usual. All on a sudden a little fly buzzed up the pane. 'A new specimen!' says Mounseer, as eager as ever, and caught the fly and corked him up in a bottle; and before the fly had done skidding up and down in the bottle, poor Mounseer passed away to the other world. But there, missy, I hadn't ought to talk to you of that part of the story. Mounseer was a good man, and I loved him well. It 'ud be a tiresome world, you know, missy, if every one was cut out on the same pattern.

"And now, missy," continued Tom, drawing from his pocket a huge silver watch, whose ticking I had heard as an accompaniment all through his story, "now,

missy, it's time for me to put a stopper on my tongue, and for you to take the doctor's stuff. It a'n't so very nasty I daresay, missy, and I'm sure you'll take it well," and poor Tom's solitary eye twinkled anxiously as he handed me the cup. The contents were really not disagreeable, so I drank them without a wry face, evidently much to the old sailor's relief. He gave me great praise. "That's good, missy," he said, "better nor I could ha' done it myself; and here's a few grapes I got for ye in the Bazaar as I was coming along. Now you'll go off to sleep, won't ye? just to make your pa trust old Tom again."

I thanked him, yawned, and in two minutes was asleep, without any visions of merry-men or jackals, which from that time troubled me no more. I recovered very slowly, however, for I had been ill several weeks, and now the hot season had set in, and it was scarcely possible to regain strength in so high a temperature. Tom returned to the lighthouse at the end of a week's leave, having sat up with me four nights, and amused me much with the yarns he delighted to spin. He was not satisfied with the progress I had made, and strongly advised a trip on the sea, which he believed to be the cure for all ills. I was now carried daily to my mother's room, where I lay on a couch taking but little notice of any thing, and feeling weak and weary. I

remember that Miss Clay came with golden bananas, or mangoes, or delicate custard-apples, and I liked to listen while she talked to my mother, and to watch her moving softly about the room. I once heard her say that she felt the heat very much, and that her father was often threatening to send her away; and after that I dreaded, every time she came, to hear her say she was going. In the evenings my father carried me into the verandah, or walked slowly up and down the garden with me in his arms; and when I was able to go, Miss Clay took me for a drive; but there was no freshness in the air day or night, the earth was dried up every where, and the trees were laden with dust. We used to pause if we passed a tank, where the great wheel, with earthen pots attached to it, was swinging round and emptying the water into the wooden trough, from which the bheesties (or water-carriers) filled skins, to carry on the backs of bullocks to the houses far and near. In other tanks, the dark grey buffaloes were wallowing in the mud. Every thing seemed gasping for the rain, which would not come yet, for we were only at the beginning of May.

One evening, when Miss Clay was sitting in the verandah beside my mother's couch, while I lay near on the floor with a cushion under my head, we saw Tom Stubbs enter the compound. He took off his hat when

he saw us, and wiped his face, which glowed with the heat like iron from the furnace.

"My dooty to you, ladies," he said, as he drew near. "I couldn't be happy any longer without a sight of little missy. Ah!" he exclaimed, as I rose and held out my hand, "the little face is pale, missy, like a weeny white rabbit a-peeping out of a hole. Excuse me, ma'am," and he turned to my mother, "you know fast enough I don't mean no disrespect to little missy."

"Indeed I know you mean nothing but kindness, Mr. Stubbs," replied my mother. "I have never yet told you how grateful I was for your good nursing when she was so ill."

"Never mention it, ma'am," he said, "I'd be proud to do it fifty times over."

My mother called to Ali to bring a chair for Mr. Stubbs, and then begged the old sailor to sit down, which he did, laying his hat on the ground beside him, and proceeding to wipe his face again with a red and yellow handkerchief.

"Very hot weather, ma'am," he remarked to Miss Clay, who stood very high in his favour; "I'm afeard you're losin' the purty roses you brought from the old country so lately."

"Indeed I fear so, Mr. Stubbs," she answered, smiling.

"I think you must wish yourself on an iceberg sometimes. I am sure I could wish it myself."

He laughed one of his silent laughs, and then said, "Well, ma'am, I think I a'most could wish it, always perwiding there wasn't no bear aboard the berg."

"Clary has amused us very much with some of your adventures," observed my mother; "we often make her tell us about them,—at least, we did so before her illness. She has not strength to talk much now."

"No, indeed, ma'am," he said, shaking his head ruefully, "stoo'in' don't suit her. It was strange enough, but when I caught sight of her to-day, she reminded me of the old times she and I sometimes talk over, when I was with Mounseer up at Labrador."

"How was that? Do tell us," said Miss Clay.

"Why, I must tell ye, ladies, there's some good people goes out to those parts, to make Christians of the poor Micmac Indians. Moravians they call themselves, and a power of good they do, for which may God bless them! It's a lonesome, dreary, self-denyin' kind of life they lead, and just once a year comes a ship with letters from home, and clothes and things. Well! you'll be wondering why missy's little face should make me think of these people, but I'll tell ye, ma'am. Mounseer and I was a-visiting a Moravian family at a settlement they have, called Nain, and the mistress showed us in

the window, a poor weak geranium-plant and two or three single white pinks; and 'Look,' says she, with tears in her eyes, 'I brought them from home with me three years ago, and I've kept them alive all this while, in spite of the ice and snow.' Now, missy looks a trifle like those poor plants, meaning no offence, ladies."

"We all look a little so, except you, Mr. Stubbs," Miss Clay said cheerfully, perhaps because she caught my mother's anxious glance towards me. "The rains will come and refresh us next month."

Just then my father returned from his office, and his arrival gave a turn to the conversation.

Towards the middle of May, Colonel Clay grew so anxious about his daughter, that he accepted the offer made him by a Parsee merchant, of the loan of a villa at Khandalla, a village in the Ghauts, and determined on taking her thither. She immediately came to try to persuade my mother to go too, and to take me; but my mother declined for herself, while thankfully consenting that I should go with my kind friend. Accordingly, one evening I found myself again in the bunder-boat we had used on the Tannah river, crossing from Mazagon Harbour, where we embarked, to Panwell on the mainland. We were late, yet the sea-breeze that blew was only a mockery of coolness. It was very dark as we approached Panwell, and we found the landing-

place blocked up with a number of boats, from which, lighted by torches, a regiment of English troops was disembarking. An officer called out from the shore to Colonel Clay, to beg that he would kindly consent to wait till the soldiers were on shore, as the removal of their boats to make way for ours would occasion much trouble and delay. Colonel Clay courteously acceded to the request, so we lay-to at a little distance from the crowded quay, and a servant who accompanied us began to prepare some refreshment at the other end of the boat. Meantime we mounted the roof of the cabin, and tried to see in what sort of place we were stopping, but our eyes could not penetrate the darkness beyond a few yards. The torches flashed on each soldier as he sprang on shore, and on the officer who stood by, list in hand, and we could hear each name called out, and each man's response, but there was no other sound save the weltering of the water, and the sigh of the breeze among the weeds and bushes at the head of the creek.

"Come down," Colonel Clay said hastily; "come into the cabin, Anne; the land-wind is blowing, and a heavy dew falling. It is not safe for you or the child."

I was not sorry to come down, for my poor little body, weakened by illness and relaxed by the heat of Bombay, was already shivering. There was a lamp in the cabin, and presently Framjee (a worthy rival of

the Farrers' Parsee John) brought us some steaming coffee, of which we all partook with great satisfaction; and then Miss Clay made a bed for me on the cabin-seat, where I soon slept more soundly than I had done for many a night past. When I awoke, I was in a carriage, the grey light was breaking over dry and dusty plains, and far away before us, with varied outlines and patches of green wood on their sides, rose the mountains to which we were going. They seemed already so near, that I thought our journey was even then ending; nevertheless, we drove on for nearly two hours more before we stopped at their foot. Palanquins were awaiting us, and we pressed on at once, as the sun was already hot, and Colonel Clay was eager to get his daughter under shelter as soon as possible. She and I went together, the bearers grunting, and sometimes chanting a rude song, as they went up the steepest parts of the ascent. We caught glimpses of strangely picturesque heights and wooded ravines, but we could not keep the doors of our palanquin open on account of the heat and glare. The bearers paused often to take breath, and at length they placed us on the ground in front of the villa which was to be our home for the present. The approach was by a covered way across a garden looking fresh and carefully tended even now, and the windows on the other side of the house opened

on a verandah that overhung a green valley, backed by mountain-tops of fantastic forms. Into this valley the nearer bank sloped softly down, with scattered trees here and there, beyond the belt of flower-garden whose rich scents filled the house. We could see vegetables growing in the lowest part of the hollow, great yellow gourds and green lettuces; and there were mangoes ripening on the trees, and yellow bananas temptingly within our reach. There was freshness in the air, in spite of the heat, and we were all well disposed for the breakfast which Framjee soon spread for us in the central apartment.

The house consisted of a single suite of rooms, five in number. The central one was a sort of dining-hall, and opening into it on one side was a sitting-room, with a bedroom beyond, now prepared for Miss Clay and me. We all expressed ourselves satisfied and pleased, in spite of our fatigue, but we retired to rest after breakfast, and made no sign again till we were summoned to an early dinner at three. Colonel Clay was in the verandah when we entered, talking to a gentleman, in whom, as he turned towards us, I was glad to recognize an old friend. "Why, Clary," said Mr. Collier (for it was he), "we meet again in a very pleasant place. I am grieved to hear you have been ill. Are you not surprised to see me here?"

"No," I replied, "I generally meet you when I'm with Miss Clay." He laughed, patted my head good-naturedly, and called me a sharp little thing; and then we sat down to dine. Already we felt the exhilarating influence of the mountain air after the stifling atmosphere of Bombay, and when we rose from table, we all went together to explore the neighbourhood on foot. From a field a little way from the house, we saw the village clustered round a tank, so large that it had all the beauty of a lake, reflecting the houses on its banks and the mountain-tops beyond. In the woods scattered on the hill-sides there were but few palms, so that the foliage afforded a pleasant change to eyes accustomed to the dark woods of Bombay. There were even many specimens of one tree that had just burst into leaf of the brightest and loveliest green, in spite of all the long months of drought. We ended by visiting the villa which I heard them say Mr. Collier had lately bought. It was quite a cottage, with a garden before the door, and one principal sitting-room; but when we had passed through this room, we reached a large verandah overhanging a ravine, with sides of precipitous grey rock dotted with shrubs, and a line of wood in its hollow, marking the bed of a torrent that was now almost dry. Mr. Collier pointed out a thin thread here and there, insignificant enough now, but certain

to become a glorious waterfall before another month had passed. We lingered till dark enjoying this lovely view, and then returned to our own abode. "Let us have tea in the verandah," Miss Clay said, as we passed Framjee at the door; and we went through the dark dining-hall to the verandah, which, as I have said, overhung the valley. Miss Clay and I stopped with an exclamation of wonder and delight as we caught the first glimpse of the scene below, which was absolutely illuminated with a blaze of fire-flies. Every tree and bush all along the winding hollow was alive with the little brilliant throbbing flames. I had seen a stray fire-fly or two at Bombay, but any thing like this glorious display I had never imagined. It was a long time before we could sit down quietly and drink the tea that Framjee brought us. "Ah, Framjee," said Mr. Collier, in English, "you are conquered to-night. Even Parsees can't make light like that."

Framjee smiled and shook his head. I thought of the "Feast of Lamps" I had once seen in Bombay, when my father drove me through the bazaars; and all the houses—Hindoo, Mussulman, and Parsee—were brilliantly illuminated, so that the crowded faces within doors, and the whirl of carriages and carts in the streets, were visible as by day; and I contrasted the glare and noise and stifling heat of that scene, with

the coolness, and sweetness, and beauty of this one. By the time the stars came out, and the crescent moon had risen over one of the hills, Mr. Collier was repeating verses, to which Miss Clay listened with evident pleasure, while her father slumbered in a shadowy corner. I was sorry when a darkly-draped figure drew softly near, and asked if missy would go to bed. Miss Clay answered that she would take me herself, and the ayah retired; but this broke up our little party, and I was soon in bed, where Miss Clay left me, saying she would very soon return. There was a light in the room, and finding, after awhile, that I could not go to sleep, I began to examine what was around me. The room was at the extreme end of the house, with a door opening from the sitting-room, and another that opened on the broad verandah surrounding the house; the windows on either side were only partially glazed, the rest being filled with jalousies. I knew that opposite to the outer door were some steps leading down into the garden, and now, as I lay alone in the strange place, having perhaps a little return of fever from the unusual fatigue of the previous day and night, I began to be troubled with all sorts of foolish fancies. The breeze came sighing up a long valley away to the right of the villa; it whispered mysteriously among the leaves of a fan-palm, such as one

sees in Chinese pictures, and which I had noticed during the day, growing close to the house; and it shook the tattered banana-leaves till they sounded like rapid footsteps pattering close at hand. There were strange cries too, some not new to me, for I remembered the jackals at Salsette, but others such as I had never heard before. One, which I afterwards knew to be the voice of a species of owl, terrified me by its resemblance to a human sound of distress. In the course of the evening, I had heard Mr. Collier say that a tiger had been seen in the ravine below his house, and that there were many wild beasts among the hills; and now it seemed to me that the stair outside would facilitate the approach of one of these monsters. The place where Miss Clay was sitting was so far off that I could scarcely hear the murmur of the conversation going on there, so I felt as if I were beyond the reach of help. Was the outer door open or shut? Did I see it flap backwards and forwards? or was it only the flickering light, shaken by the draught, that made it seem to move? Was a savage beast creeping up the steps, prowling round the house, sniffing at the door, pushing to try if the fastening were undone? Should I presently see the fiery eyes, hear the stealthy foot-step?

My heart beat thick and fast, and my terror was

becoming unmanageable, when the other door opened, and Miss Clay entered softly from the sitting-room. I was so startled that I cried aloud, and then came a delightful sense of relief and safety.

"What now, my little Clary?" she said, as she came to the bedside. "I hoped to find you asleep, and when I saw the old Ramoosee preparing to come his rounds, I thought I would come here, lest he should wake you, and you might be scared to find yourself in a strange place. What has been the matter, little one, to make you so flushed?"

"Nothing, nothing now you are come," I replied, clinging fondly round her neck; "I will go to sleep if you will stay with me."

She soothed me, bathed my head with scented water, and reminded me of the little hymn she had taught me to repeat when I was wakeful, and which, in my late agony of mind, had not occurred to me. Then I watched her as the ayah untwisted the coils of golden hair, and while watching her I felt no fear, though the old Ramoosee (or night-guard) was making his rounds and shuffling along the verandah past our windows, shaking the dreaded door as he passed, to ascertain that it was securely fastened.



CHAPTER VIII.

KHANDALLA AND POONAH.

THE next few days were among the happiest I ever passed. We grew familiar with the shapes of the hills around us, and observed in every aspect that one which, from its supposed resemblance to the Duke of Wellington's profile, went by the name of the Duke's nose. No doubt, as seen from one spot, with purple shadows hiding some of its inequalities, it was like a huge and solemn face looking up into the sky. Our nearest hill, rising with soft slope opposite to the verandah where all our evenings were passed, had, however, the strongest attraction for us, and we had been but few days at Khandalla, when it was determined that we should ascend to its very topmost point some morning at early dawn, and hang a flag on a pole that already stood there. We fulfilled our project, though the task was a heavier one

than we expected, and we had hardly time to get back to shelter before the heat of the day was upon us ; but the view amply repaid the effort.

During the middle of the day, we were obliged to remain under cover, but we began our afternoon excursions earlier than we could have ventured to do at Bombay. One of our trips was to visit some famous caves in a hill-side on the road to Poonah. We all went thither in the carriage, but riding-horses were to meet us there, and I was to drive home in solitary state while the others rode. Mr. Collier condoled with me as we drove along, asked if I did not wish I could have the twins to bear me company, and laughed at the eagerness with which I declared I did not want them at all. He asked Miss Clay if she had lately heard of her dear little cousins.

"Yes," she replied, "I heard last week from Mrs. Farrer, indeed, she wrote to beg I would go to her. They are all enjoying themselves very much at Mahableshwar, and she says the hills were never so gay, or the rides so thronged."

"How you could resist such temptation, to say nothing of the menagerie, is to me wonderful," said Mr. Collier, but Miss Clay did not answer. We turned off the high road at length, crossed a dusty plain with a few scrubby bushes dotted over it, and stopped at the

foot of a hill. Here we left the carriage, and began ascending a zigzag path, pleasantly shaded with trees here and there, and after many a pause to take breath, or to admire the continually increasing panorama below, we stood on the platform in front of the caves of Carlee. The first thing on which my eye rested was a tall fluted pillar, surmounted with figures of animals; this stood out alone in front of the cave on the left, while on the right was a small building, from behind which, crawling like some great beetle, came a yogi, or religious beggar, crying aloud for alms. The sight of him and his unearthly cries induced me to seize Miss Clay's hand and hurry her through the arched doorway, and then we paused in wonder, there was so much in the shape and arrangement of the place to remind even me of a church. The rounded roof had ribs of wood at intervals; on either side the central aisle was a row of pillars, with a narrow side-aisle beyond, between them and the wall; and at the farther end was the shrine. Closer inspection showed us the strange carved figures of elephants and human beings surmounting each pillar. The shrine was only a dome of white stone, surmounted with the fragments of a wooden umbrella. It was a dreary, sad place after all, and I longed to leave it, but my companions were much interested, and observed every part with care and atten-

tion. I should have liked to run out on the platform, only I feared to meet the old crawling beggar.

"We have forgotten poor little Clary all this time," exclaimed Miss Clay, as, in a pause in the conversation, I looked up at her appealingly. "You don't care much for this dismal-looking place," she continued; "but trust me, dear, some day you will like to remember you have been here. This is a world-famous place, Clary, and a very ancient place. They have been telling me that this cave was scooped out of the hill, yes, and those wooden rafters put up there, nearly eighteen hundred years ago. Look at it all well, Clary: you must not forget you have been here, as long as you live."

Her words made an impression, and I did look about me more attentively; but it was a relief to leave the heathenish place for the outside air, and the view of hill, valley, and plain which the platform commanded. The beggar had retired to his hiding-place, and we were undisturbed as we lingered to notice the many pigeon-holes in the rock all about the caves, dwelling-places, at some time long past, of devotees, or priests.

It was still quite clear daylight when we reached the foot of the hill, where three horses were awaiting my companions. They put me into the large open barouche, and then mounted and cantered across the plain, calling out that they would keep me in sight.

For my part, I was jolted over the uneven ground till I reached the high road, and then, by way of amusement, I began to fancy myself a grown-up lady riding in my own carriage. First I was Miss Clay; then I spread out my skirts and tossed my head, and imagined I was Mrs. Farrer, and I bowed right and left to imaginary passers-by; but in the midst of one of my most dignified salutes, I heard a laugh on the other side of the carriage, and presently found that Mr. Collier had been watching me, so I grew very red, and subsided into the corner of the seat.

We passed the evening, as usual, in the verandah, enjoying the sight of the fire-flies in the valley below, contrasted with the white light of the moon, now ten days older than when we had arrived at Khandalla. Perhaps Miss Clay thought there was a danger of my being troubled with some of my terrors that night, after seeing the caves; at all events, she kept me beside her till she retired for the night herself; and when I was in bed, she sat beside me and talked, not of the 'gods of the heathen' and the dark places of the earth, but of the Light that came into the world, the Babe that was laid in a rude manger at Bethlehem; and I fell asleep while she was repeating one of my favourite hymns;

"I think, when I hear that sweet story of old."

I was playing in the garden on the following morning when the riding-horses were brought to the gate, and I drew near to see Colonel and Miss Clay and Mr. Collier mount. Perhaps I looked rather disconsolate when they were riding off, for Mr. Collier turned back, and asked if I would like a ride, and in another moment I was sitting before him on his horse, a little nervous, but extremely happy. We turned out of the grounds of the villa into one of the many pleasant paths, cut along the hill-slopes by some former inhabitant of Khandalla, and as we looked down into the valley on either side the road from Poonah, we saw a herd of several hundred bullocks, each laden with a sack of cotton, going down towards Bombay. Their hoofs raised a cloud of dust from the dry soil, and the drivers uttered uncouth cries that disturbed the usual silence of morning among the hills. I returned greatly delighted with the expedition, although a saddle-peak does not afford the most luxurious of resting-places.

"I would promise to take you again," said Mr. Collier as we dismounted, "only that I see signs foretelling a change, and I fear the monsoon will soon be upon us. We shall not have many more early rides."

In truth, the sky, so clear and blue for many months, was beginning to be overcast, and by mid-day black

clouds were collecting over the mountains, and the air grew so dusky that in the rooms shaded by the deep verandah, we could scarcely see to do any thing. Colonel Clay, who was busied in writing some report for the Government, assisted by Mr. Collier, and sometimes also by Miss Clay, was obliged to carry his table into the verandah. There was a strange hush of expectation in the air. The lizards we had been amused to watch daily basking in the sunshine, had crept away out of sight, and nothing seemed moving out-of-doors throughout the sultry afternoon. As evening came on, and the house was lighted up, myriads of insects came in, and kept up a perpetual tinkling, as they tapped against the glass screens that protected the flame of candles and lamps. We went out to look about us. A hollow sound was coming up the dry valley, the trees began to shiver, and presently, with a loud crash of thunder and a wild blaze of lightning, the storm burst upon us. Grandeur than tongue can tell was the voice of the thunder among the mountains, and glorious the scene, as flash after flash showed us the points and crags that surrounded our dwelling.

We rushed to the shelter of the verandah as the rain began to fall, not in drops, but in sheets of water, like the rush of a torrent. We could get but little sleep that night, with the thunder roaring at intervals, and

the unaccustomed sound of the rain never ceasing at all.

The next day and the next there was little change, and we were, of necessity, prisoners to the house; even Mr. Collier, who was now established under our roof, instead of going to his own bungalow.

The altered scene had a great fascination at first for Miss Clay, who would stand in the verandah and watch the incessant down-pour, beneath which the hills became green as emeralds in a few hours; but she confessed, after a time, to a sense of monotony, and a wish that the noise of the rain would cease even for a few minutes.

It did not cease, however, for a whole week, at the end of which period we entered our palanquins and were conveyed to the foot of the mountains, and thence, in a carriage leaking at every corner, to Panwell, where we found the bunder-boat awaiting us. Our week's imprisonment had not been very grievous, I think, to any of the party, except, perhaps occasionally to Colonel Clay, who loved an active out-of-door life. Sometimes in the evenings, Miss Clay and Mr. Collier sang without accompaniment, save the ringing rain outside; sometimes they read aloud; and once they tried their skill at acrostics, and made new ones when they had repeated all they could recollect. Among my old papers, written in ink now faded, I found the other day some of these

compositions, copied out for me by Miss Clay. I will give them here, placing Miss Clay's first.

DOUBLE ACROSTIC.

1.

1. A Desert stretched beneath a burning sun :
2. Fuel to feed the lamp, when day is done :
3. The lands that own a Monarch's regal sway :
4. A city built beside a world-famed Bay :
5. The boon for which unchastened sorrow sighs :
6. The lover's haunt, the Poet's Paradise.

Thoughts but of gloom although my initials bring,
My finals tell of hope and joyful Spring.

DOUBLE ACROSTIC.

2.

1. The early frost has made them crisp and bright :
2. The seer who saw, far off, the Gospel light :
3. A city on the fair Italian shore :
4. In hidden nook the miser's secret store :
5. That which, when past away, returns no more.

About the *initials* laughing sunbeams play,
The *finals* follow, as night follows day.

DOUBLE ACROSTIC.

3.

1. All day the Pilgrims move in long-drawn line
To bend the knee before their Prophet's shrine.
2. Hark ! o'er the Desert-sands their voices float,
Chanting at eventide the same sweet note ;
3. Or ballad, crooning forth a tale of woe,
4. Like the Greek captive Queen's, who, long ago,
Watched the blue Bosphorus' waters ebb and flow.
5. The patient beast lies resting on the sand,
Stars gleam on high, and darkness shrouds the
land.

Softly my first upon their sleep shall break,
Bidding the faithful with the dawn awake,
And as the gracious murmurs bid them rise,
They'll deem my last is whisp'ring from the skies.

The following is one of Mr. Collier's, a first attempt,
as he declared :

DOUBLE ACROSTIC.

1. Confusion dire and noisy din :
2. Notion or thought, the mind within :
3. A foe to rob the larder come :
4. The maid who first sang, "Home, sweet home :"

5. The long-billed bird that hears and sees
The falcon's rush, and trembling, flees.

The *initials* tell the means that rule
Our British youth in learning's school,
And make my *finals*' crabbed tongue
Familiar music to the young.

Even Colonel Clay was induced to try his skill at this amusement, so novel to him, and after much thought he handed his daughter the following double acrostic :

“What you are,
What you will ever be.

1. A Protector,
2. A Workman,
3. A Music-gallery,
4. A Poet.”

The answers are not hard to find, so I will not give them here, lest by doing so, I should seem to insult my reader's powers of guessing.

It was very pleasant to feel myself once more in my father's arms, and to sit beside my mother and tell of all my adventures. There was even a charm in Mrs.

Armstrong's welcome, though it was soon followed by sighs and groans over the dilapidated state of my wardrobe, consequent on my scrambles up hill and down dell at Khandalla. Cactus-plants had been unfriendly to my best muslin frock, and shreds of my worked jacket were bleaching on the thorn-bushes near Carlee. The assurance that Miss Clay was braiding a suit of China-silk for me partially allayed the storm, and then my father forbade any further mention of the subject.

The monsoon had now set in, in real earnest, and it was often difficult for me to get across the road, so heavily and incessantly fell the rain. The heat, too, continued almost undiminished, and if the rain paused for a moment in its fall, great clouds of steam rose from the burning soil. Miss Clay's roses were fast fading in the unhealthy, stifling atmosphere, and whenever I was able to go to her in a pause of the deluge, I found her languid, and unequal to exertion. In the afternoon the horses were put in harness, and if there were a break in the weather, the carriage was brought to the door, and we set forth for a drive, usually to the shore at Breach Candy, where the angry sea came frothing over the black rocks; but we always returned in a pelting shower, with the carriage and all its windows closely shut. In the evening, especially during the first fortnight of the monsoon, the evenings were most disagreeable, for the

lighting of lamp or candle seemed the signal for all sorts of creatures to flock into the house, and any employment was out of the question.

In the fourth or fifth week of the rains, my father was dining with our friends, as he often did now, and Mr. Collier was there also. I took my place at dessert at the round table, between my father and Miss Clay; and amused myself by listening to the conversation.

"This would not be a good time to ask you how you like India," my father observed to Miss Clay. She smiled, and answered cheerfully, perhaps noticing that Colonel Clay had turned towards her with a look of anxiety.

"I was writing to England to-day," she said, "and I really could not help laughing when I read over my letter, finding it a detail of petty miseries from beginning to end. A pathetic chapter of my life it formed, I can assure you; from rising in the morning unrefreshed by slumber, and limp as wet blotting-paper, through the languid hours passed in dark rooms in a bath of hot vapour, with a frame too feeble for occupation, to the very close; when, to escape the persecutions of frogs, and rats, and bats, and moths, and mosquitoes, and myriads of winged creatures, one creeps into a bed that, like every thing else, is damp and miserable. Nay, this is not all; for all night the rain falls ringing down, the sea roars, the grasshoppers utter their metallic cry,

the great frogs croak in the marshes, and the ramossee coughs aloud as he goes his rounds!"

"You will find every thing very different at Poonah, I assure you," said my father. "When do you go?"

"The day after to-morrow," she replied. "I hear so much in praise of Poonah that I am quite anxious to see the place."

"Poonah!" I repeated, in alarm. "Oh, Miss Clay, are you going away?"

"Yes, my poor Clary," she said, patting my head, "I am going away, but I will take you with me if you like to go. Will you leave papa and mamma for a little while to go to Poonah with me?"

I had so pleasant a recollection of our trip to Salsette, that I looked eagerly at my father for permission to accept this invitation. He nodded and smiled, and the whole matter was settled. Two days later we were in the bunder-boat,—Colonel and Miss Clay, Mr. Collier, Mr. and Mrs. Dwight, Colonel Farrer and myself,—closely shut into the cabin, with the rain pelting on the roof, and the strong breeze bending the boat over nearly on her broadside. We landed at Panwell, still in the same driving rain, and entered the carriages that awaited us on the quay. The afternoon was already advanced, and we were to sleep at Khandalla, so we pressed on as well as the state of the roads and the con-

dition of the horses would allow. Now and then, a pause in the rain allowed us to see the great change the monsoon had wrought in the appearance of the country.

The baked hollows had become ponds and lakes, the hills were clad in radiant green, and the trees looked fresh and full of leaf. We were thankful on other accounts for ever so brief a cessation of the rain ; for the leathern top of our rickety vehicle leaked in several places, and we were obliged to spread cloaks on our knees to catch the water. Darkness fell some time before we stopped at the foot of the Ghaut, where a busy throng was moving in the light of many torches. Palanquins for the whole party, each with its torch-men and double set of bearers, were drawn up in front of the station-house, and, amidst much noise and confusion, I found myself safely deposited in a palanquin with Miss Clay, beginning the ascent of the mountain. Here the rain kindly paused for awhile, and we could keep the doors of our vehicle open and look out on the strange scene. The torches flared high when the men poured some resinous substance on them, and shone on the wild dark figures which surrounded us. Now and then we had glimpses of the wonderful eastern foliage, the great leaves of tree and creeper wet and glistening as the light fell on them ; sometimes the rays glanced on a stone by the road-side streaked with red paint, and

saluted with some respect by the natives; or now a momentary flash showed the gloomy depth of a precipice falling abruptly to the dark valley below. Before we reached the Travellers' Bungalow, the rain was falling again, hissing on the torches and clattering on the roof of the palanquin, so that we were glád to get into the house. Dinner was soon ready, but even the charms of prawn-curry failed to detain us long. Miss Clay took me to the room we were to share, and I was soon asleep.

At four the next morning we were called, and dressing hastily, we joined the rest of the party in a hurried breakfast, and prepared to resume our journey. Colonel Clay seemed uneasy.

"You look pale and tired, Anne," he said; "I will wait for you, if you like to stay here longer."

"No, thank you, papa," she said, smiling. "The fact is, I never slept, or tried to sleep, on a gridiron before last night. By all means let us go on."

So we went on the other forty miles of our journey, and in the pauses of the showers saw much to amuse us. People were at work in the rice-fields, both men and women, their chief article of attire being a basket of queer shape, sheltering them in some degree from the rain as they stooped over the plants. In one place where we changed horses, a snake-charmer was making a cobra dance with reared crest to the music of a pipe.

The syces who ran by the horses often diverted us by the strangeness of their dress: one, who seemed a special dandy, and splashed along the wet roads with bare brown legs, with a self-satisfied air, wore a drummer's old coat of scarlet, while on his head was a sugar-loaf cap, half of red, half of bright blue cloth, covered with yellow embroidery. Others had jackets made from old chintz window-curtains, with flaring bunches of red and yellow flowers, giving them a most grotesque appearance. Miss Clay called my attention to the beauty of the scenery by her own exclamations of delight. The hills were like living emeralds, the water-courses full, and the woods in the valleys were indescribably lovely, particularly one composed entirely of bamboos, whose light and lovely foliage I have never seen surpassed.

The sun was hot as we crossed the bridge over the river near Poonah, and saw the Brahmins on the steps below the temple on the farther bank, drawing water or washing their garments in the stream. As we drove across the plain, Mr. Collier, who was in the carriage with Colonel and Miss Clay and myself, asked me how I felt at the prospect of entering the menagerie again? I looked inquiringly at Miss Clay, who laughed as she said, "I don't think Clary knows that she is going there." It was true that I had asked no questions, and I was not quite agreeably surprised to find that we were

to be guests in Mrs. Farrer's house; however, so long as I remained beside Miss Clay, I was content. We drove on till we reached the artillery lines, and the carriage containing Colonel Farrer and the Dwights preceded us, passing into a garden where balsams and flowers of every colour were tangled in the richest profusion, and pausing under a porch quite curtained with jessamine in full bloom. The twins were dancing frantically on the verandah, and shouting a welcome to the whole party, and Mrs. Farrer, in her gayest gown of apple-green, held up the baby to kiss his father. The twins pounced upon me as I stepped into the verandah, and dragged me to the nursery, to see a parrot which had been given to them, and which they probably liked because it was as noisy as themselves. Miss Clay came to my rescue; and then followed an hour of laughing, talking, and eating; after which, I found myself lying on a mat in a cool room, with a pillow under my head, and soon fell into a delicious sleep. When I woke, it was so dark, that I could only just distinguish the figure of Miss Clay moving softly about the room. I was soon at her side.

"Come, Clary," she said, "every one is gone out but you and I. Let us explore the garden together, and see what the house looks like from the outside." We were soon enjoying the open air, fresh, cool, and de-

lightful after the oppressive atmosphere of Bombay, so that my companion's languor had given place to a lively interest in the new scenes to which we had come. The garden was a very wilderness of sweetness and beauty, and even the tall trees that bounded it were gay with blossoms of varied colours. The house, which had been lent to the Farrers by a friend, covered a considerable space, but was of only one story in height. The north side looked into a square of out-buildings: on the other three sides, the shallow verandah was enclosed in trellis-work, to which clung plants of Indian honeysuckle loaded with flowers of every shade between pale pink and crimson—looking not unlike the bunches of coral charms which travellers bring from Naples.

“It is a very pretty screen seen from without,” observed Miss Clay, “but it makes the rooms particularly dark. It has its use, though we find it in our way now, Clary. Delightfully fresh as the air is at this season, I am told that when the hot winds are blowing, people are obliged to shut up their houses to keep out the heat. That is why the windows are all glazed here, instead of being merely filled with jalousies as they were at Bombay. But there are no hot winds now, and I think we shall like this place, don't you, Clary?”

We passed out of the garden-gate into a road that skirted the plain, and was bordered with trees. Here

we were joined by Mr. Collier, who took us past some houses standing in gardens like our own, and past the space where the artillery-horses were picketed in the open air, to a kind of down, which Miss Clay said reminded her of England. We had hardly re-entered the house, when Mrs. Farrer returned from her drive, and, sending the children to their nursery, came into the drawing-room, which occupied the centre of the house, having windows at each end.

"Well, it really is a comfort to find some one here, Anne," she remarked, as she seated herself. "I can tell you my evenings have been most dismal, when I have been at home. If I looked up from my book, I was sure to see the black face of one of the servants pressed against one window or the other, to see if I was going to bed, that they might retire also. I was early enough too, for I always went to my room as soon as I heard the trumpet at the barracks; and that sounds at nine o'clock."

"I think I shall follow your example to-night," Miss Clay said, "but after a good night's rest, I mean to enjoy Poonah very much."

I believe Miss Clay kept her word. I know that the next few weeks were a happy time to me. I remember with pleasure to this day the fresh cool mornings when we rode over the plains, the evening drives among the

vast fields of grain, with here and there a village or a mango-grove to vary the scene. There were favourite spots by the river-side, where we lingered again and again; and there was a ruin of a palace (built by Scindiah when he besieged Poonah, I believe), to which we went several times, that Miss Clay might sketch it. In the second week of our stay, Colonel Farrer, Colonel Clay, and Mr. Collier left us to return to their public duties at Bombay. The evening before their departure, we all went to the top of a hill above the native town, where there are some famous temples. I was much amused with all we saw on our way through the city, which is of considerable size. The houses were decorated with paintings, one of which represented a tiger, some twenty times larger than the men and horses that hunted him; and there were carved balconies, and temples of fretted stone, and buildings of all shapes and sizes. In front of one of the temples was a group of men leading a white goat, and carrying long strings of red and white roses. In another place, we met a Brahminee bull, white as snow, with costly drapery over his hump, stalking among the crowd of natives, who made way for the sacred animal with the utmost respect. Beyond the streets lay a large tank, like a lake, with fine trees about it; and rising from its farther shore was the hill we were to ascend by a

wide flight of steps. We reached the top at last, and through half-open doors caught glimpses of some of the hideous Hindoo idols, said to be here enriched with jewels of price. The charm of the place for our party seemed to lie in the view it commanded, and Miss Clay made me notice the wide rich plains with villages dotting them here and there, rivers winding among them, and the fantastic hills that varied the line of the horizon. It was night before we left the hill.

Our life was very quiet after the gentlemen were gone, for Mrs. Farrer was not very well, and therefore could not receive any company except the Dwights, who were settled in a house very near us. One event which occurred at this time made a strong impression on my mind. Mrs. Farrer had brought from Bombay a favourite little tailor, whose seat from day to day was in the north verandah, where the twins and I often watched him at his work. He was the most industrious of men. Now busied on some little garment for the children, now hemming some of Mrs. Farrer's endless flounces (for all such work is done in India by men, not by women), the little Portuguese worked on unweariedly from morn till night. If, in wildness of spirits, one of the twins would perhaps snatch his work from his hands, he merely looked after her with a mild expression of remonstrance, and applied himself to a fresh task.

One morning we had watched him while we waited for our ponies for the early ride before breakfast. When we returned, he was not in his usual place, but the exigences of hunger called off the attention of the twins from the fact of his absence, and it was not till later in the day that they began to ask what had become of the little man. Mrs. Farrer answered that he was not well, and no more was said on the subject. The following afternoon, as I stood at one of the north windows with Miss Clay, discussing the question of our evening drive, I saw a small funeral procession emerge from one of the outhouses and file out of the court, led by a priest in a black robe. I felt Miss Clay clutch my hand tightly as she led me from the window and sat down, looking grave and shocked.

"Oh! what is it?" I asked. "It can't be, oh! Miss Clay, surely it can't be the poor little tailor! It is so soon, so very soon! I saw him working yesterday morning. Surely it can't be that?"

But her grave sad face told me that I had guessed the truth. The twins had, unfortunately, found it out also, and came to look for their mother, screaming partly with grief, partly with fear; and the evening passed drearily enough, though Miss Clay rallied her spirits, and tried her utmost to amuse us with games and pictures. A shade of gloom remained over the

house for several days. The knowledge that cholera had seized a victim from among them, made the other servants nervous and ill, and they perpetually came to Mrs. Farrer for remedies for their pains, real or imaginary. Like many other ladies in India, she always had a huge bottle, labelled "cholera mixture," in her dressing-room, and this needed refilling several times while the panic lasted. By degrees, the poor little tailor ceased to be remembered, and a new one sat in his place, hemming Mrs. Farrer's voluminous flounces.

We had other adventures of a more cheerful character. One day an elephant, the property of some gentleman in the neighbourhood, was brought for the twins to see. It came pounding along, guided by the mahout who rode on its neck, and Miss Clay fetched some bread to feed the monster, which took a loaf in a curl of its trunk, and deposited the morsel in its enormous mouth. The twins were half-frightened, and leapt and vociferated violently at every movement of the animal. At other times a party of natives would arrive with tom-toms and monkeys, and go through a performance that we found very diverting. In the evenings, we often drove to the place where a military band played, for the amusement of a crowd of ladies and gentlemen in carriages and on horseback. On these

occasions the twins, gaily dressed and in wild spirits, had something to say to every body who approached to greet their mother and Miss Clay, while I remained in the background, silent but not unobservant. The races took place while we were at Poonah, and not only Colonel Farrer and Colonel Clay, but also Mr. Collier, came up from Bombay on the occasion. The scene was gay and amusing, and I found myself extremely delighted when my favourite horse proved to be the winner. A few days later, we drove towards the bridge by which we had approached Poonah on our first arrival. The rains had been unusually heavy in the hills, and we had heard that the river was so swollen as to threaten the safety of the bridge. Something more than ordinary seemed to be expected, for parties of natives were going the same way as ourselves, and when at length we reached the bank, we saw the turbid stream rolling along full and strong, but so shrunk as no longer to inspire fear, for the bridge was crowded with people. The sight of the crowd reminded Mr. Collier that this was the day of a great festival, when the natives of this part of India threw images of Gunputtee, their elephant-headed idol, into the water. We were not near enough to see them do this, but we were observing the crowd with curiosity, when suddenly the rain began pattering down, and in a moment hundreds

of umbrellas were unfurled, red and blue, yellow and green, till the dark crowd seemed metamorphosed into a gaudy flower-bed. But we could not stop to admire: we were obliged to have the carriage closed, and to hurry home as if we had been at Bombay.



CHAPTER IX.

THE BRIDE.

THUS glided on the happy weeks ; quiet mornings with Miss Clay, when we repaired to our room for lessons after breakfast, and pleasant hours in the open air. I had learned to like the noisy, goodhumoured twins, and to be less annoyed by Mrs. Farrer's habit of calling me "little Grantham : " nevertheless my heart yearned sometimes for my father and mother, and I wondered whether they missed me. These thoughts were in my mind one memorable morning, as I stood near Miss Clay, waiting to read to her till she should have finished her letters. That day seemed like all other days ; the

air was just stirring the boughs and shaking out the scent of the flowers, the darkened room was fresh and cool, and the usual occupations lay on the table; and yet that day was to bring me a wonderful joy.

"Clary, I have some strange news to tell you," said Miss Clay, laying down her letter, and drawing me close to her side; "some glad, bright news, dear, that will make you very happy. Clary, you have a little brother. Think of that, Clary! Oh! how happy you are, little one! You have a brother of your very own."

Her face was very bright, though there were tears in her eyes. I felt stunned and bewildered, and could not answer at first. By and by, I said, "Tell me again, please. I don't understand."

So she told me again, tenderly and kindly, that God had given me a brother; and as she spoke of the love which he and I should bear each other, I knew she was thinking of her own brother, whom in this world she would never see more. Then she gave me a note from my father, enclosing a little lock of downy hair, that I might see, he said, that what he told me was true; and Miss Clay found a locket among her trinkets and put the hair in it and tied it round my neck, and I went about all day very proud and happy.

Soon after this, I was very glad to hear that Colonel

Clay was coming to fetch us. I longed intensely to see the new treasure in my home, and Miss Clay was impatient to be with her father, now that the cooler weather was coming on. On a grey day, we set forth on our journey homewards, and at Khandalla, where we stopped for the afternoon and night, Mr. Collier met us. We rested during the warmest part of the day, and in the evening drove to the bungalow that had been our home for awhile in the hot weather, and afterwards to the one which belonged to Mr. Collier. Both looked damp and dreary. Mildew was on the walls and furniture, a fringe of tall grass along every seam in the roof, while in the gardens coarse rank weeds were crawling over the wet soil, or clinging about the trees. The hills, however, had gained in beauty, from the freshness of the turf that clothed them, and of the woods that ran up their sides; and down the dreary valley through which I used to expect wild beasts to come stealing towards the house, a sinuous stream that looked like a silvery snake, was winding merrily along, while little rills came dancing from the heights to join it.

We were early on the road the next morning. "You look as if you had slept well, Anne," said Colonel Clay.

"Yes, papa," she answered; "thanks to some kind

friend, a good mattress was laid over the gridiron last night;" at which remark the Colonel looked highly gratified.

We did not go down the mountain this time in palanquins, but in an open carriage, the wheels of which were checked by ropes held by a large party of natives. The freshness of the dawn was delightful, and every turn of the zigzag road brought fresh beauties to view. I remember especially a little snow-white temple beside a lake, which reflected its every stone; the whole embosomed in woods at the bottom of a deep ravine. When we reached the plains, the air was not so pleasant, but the two gentlemen beguiled the way with tales of the places we passed. Indeed, as we came down the mountain, Mr. Collier gave us a piteous account of a poor lady, who was going up to Khandaalla, at night, alone in a palanquin, when suddenly her bearers cried out that there was a tiger approaching, placed her vehicle on the ground, and fled; and there she was found by some travellers who came up several hours later. Whether she had really heard the panting of the wild beast, and the scratch of his claws on the roof of her hiding-place, or whether she had only imagined such sounds in the interval, her terror had been very genuine, and never to be forgotten. There are wild sounds among the hills at night, almost

alarming to those who are safely housed, and terrific to one whose frail abode might by a touch be sent toppling over a precipice, even if she escaped the jaws of the tiger and the bear.

In the dreariest part of the road between Khandalla and Panwell, we came up with Miss Clay's pianoforte, carried with slings by men, and surrounded with a relay of bearers, laughing and chattering loudly. We had seen a good deal of furniture travelling in this fashion on our way, both going and coming, and the primitive mode of moving it amused Miss Clay, to whom it was a novelty.

We landed at Mazagon, where I found my father awaiting me. How eagerly I sprang into his arms, and questioned him about my little brother! After a few words with Miss Clay, he lifted me into his buggy, and we drove rapidly homewards. In the verandah stood Mrs. Armstrong with a bundle in her arms. She smiled grimly as she stooped to show me this new little wonder. My brother was smaller than I expected, and redder; and, to say the truth, uglier; however, I consoled myself with the idea that he would certainly grow, and that his face would not be so bad if he stopped making grimaces. His hands were undeniably pretty, only so tiny and delicate that I was almost afraid to touch them. My mother's kiss and

smile of welcome were sweeter than ever. We had endless talks together of all that I had done and seen, and of the charms and sweetness of the baby. The next morning, Miss Clay came to see us, and, after duly admiring the new comer, went near the couch on which my mother lay, and bent down to kiss her. My mother, usually so quiet and reserved, put her arms round my dear friend's neck and kissed her several times, then said very warmly, "God bless you, dear! I was sure it would be so, and I hope you will be very, very happy for many a long year." I wondered what these words might mean, but my curiosity was not gratified till a few days later, when I was spending the morning at our neighbours' as usual, and an old Jew from Calcutta came into the verandah, and spread before us a number of embroidered white dresses. Miss Clay selected two or three for herself, and then, taking a child's frock from the heap, put it into my hands.

"This is for you, Clary," she said, "and I will tell you by and by on what occasion you are to wear it."

So when the old Jew had packed up his goods and departed, she told me that ere long she was to be married, and that I must be one of her bridesmaids, and wear the worked frock she had given me. I was too much surprised to speak for some time, and I



The Old Pedlar displaying his Wares.

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could not tell whether I was glad or sorry, so I stood with my head on Miss Clay's shoulder. "Well, Clary," she said, drawing me round, so that she could see my face; "won't you say you wish I may be happy, as your dear mother did? Don't you want to know any more about it?"

I always felt shy when my feelings were much moved, and now they almost choked me, so that I could not utter a word of the love I felt. There was no need, for I was with one who could read my heart. She kissed me and went on speaking: "We shall still be friends, Clary, just the same. I shall be away for a little while, and then come back to live here, and my husband will be very kind to you. Can you guess his name?"

"Oh! do I know him?" I cried, and then an idea flashed upon me. It must be Mr. Collier, and there was no one in all the little world of my acquaintance I should have liked so well. My conjecture was right, and my mind soon grew accustomed to the prospect of this new change.

The days passed on. The old Chinese shoemaker came with spectacles on nose, and huge umbrella under his arm, to measure me for a pair of white kid shoes. My frock was made, and a dainty little white bonnet had been sent from England among Miss Clay's own

millinery. At our neighbours', all was busy preparation, for, though Miss Clay wished her wedding to be very quiet, yet when she saw that for it to be so would vex and mortify her father, she sacrificed her wishes to his, as it had ever been her custom to do. The old Indian officer loved a little display, so there was to be a great gathering of all the society, now returned to spend the cool season at Bombay.

The evening before the wedding, Miss Clay came across to see my mother. My father had not yet returned from the fort, baby was asleep on Mrs. Armstrong's lap in the next room, and all was very quiet. Miss Clay threw aside her hat and took a low seat beside the couch, while I nestled on the floor at her feet.

"The last evening!" said my mother, laying her hand caressingly on the golden hair I thought so beautiful. "The last evening that Anne Clay will ever sit beside me in this quiet room, which she has so often made happy. You have done much for me and mine, dear. God bless you for it!"

"Not half what you have done for me," was the reply; "and believe me, Anne Clay's friends will only be dearer to Anne Collier."

"Among all the beautiful presents which Clary tells me you have received, I have not had courage to offer

my poor little gift," my mother said, smiling. "Will you take it now? It has been a labour of love, and that will give it value in your eyes."

The gift was a handkerchief of her own delicate embroidery; and I noticed on the following day, that the bride carried it in her hand, instead of the one that had been sent from England for the occasion.

"Before I go, Clary," said Miss Clay, as she rose to leave us, "I must give you this little box, which Mr. Collier sends you with his love. It contains a pearl locket with my hair in it, and a gold chain; and you must wear both to-morrow, to show that you forgive him for taking me away."

The ornament seemed to me so beautiful, that I was speechless with admiration, and meantime Miss Clay took a tender leave of my mother, and then came towards me, stooped to kiss me, and was gone. When I ran to the window, I saw her white dress disappearing behind the mimosas and oleanders in the Colonel's garden.

The next day, in Byculla Church, every corner of which was filled with people, I stood near and saw the marriage of my two best friends; and the first face which Mrs. Collier's eye sought, after she had exchanged a word with her father, was mine. Oh! how proud I was! proud of the tall, queenly bride, whom

every one was admiring in her crown of flowers, and her flowing veil, but prouder still of the look, the smile that singled me out of all that admiring crowd. The twins, who were present, had been kept tolerably quiet during the service, but became clamorous in the vestry, on catching sight of the favours, and after a vain attempt had been made to satisfy them by pinning two on each of them, they were conducted to the carriage and soothed with a promise of rich cake. I was brought forward to sign the register, and scrawled my name with a trembling hand; then we all returned to the carriages and drove to Colonel Clay's, where a breakfast was laid in a room profusely adorned with flowers. By and by there were speeches and cheers, and then some one touched me, and I rose and followed the bride to her chamber, where she changed her dress, and prepared for her journey. When every one but ourselves had left the room, she said, "Do you remember last Christmas at Salsette, Clary? when you and I spent our Christmas Day together as quietly as we could?"

"Oh yes," I answered, "and Mr. Collier came and sat with us by the tank, and we heard the jackals."

"I am going there again, Clary," she said, "and I shall think of my little friend when I listen to the fountains. God bless you, Clary!"

In a few minutes she was gone, and the crowd of

guests had begun to disperse; and soon I was relating to my mother all the events of that wonderful morning. Of course I missed my kind friend in the three weeks of our separation that ensued, but not as I should have done formerly. No one interfered with my visits to my mother now; and, though my kitten had grown into a large, stupid, sleepy cat, yet I had a better amusement in watching my little brother. Mrs. Armstrong was too much absorbed in the care of the baby to be severe with me. One evening, however, when my father came home, he found me alone in the verandah.

"Poor little woman!" he said, as I started up to meet him, dropping a lapful of marigold flowers. "How is it I find you alone, and what are you doing to amuse yourself?"

"Mamma is asleep, and Mrs. Armstrong told me to stay here till she woke, so I was playing. I was making a wreath," I said, holding it up, "to hang round my cat's neck. Don't you remember, papa, how all the horses were dressed up with flowers one day, after we came from Poonah? But this stupid old thing doesn't want to be smart one bit!"

"Get your hat and come with me in the buggy, then, and we will see how Mr. Stubbs is getting on."

I clapped my hands for joy, flew up-stairs and equipped

myself, whispering to Mrs. Armstrong to tell my mother when she awoke, where we were going. On the road we met many carriages, and there was a crowd round the band-stand on the esplanade, listening to the music. Quite a little town, composed of tents and light wattled dwellings, had risen on the green outside of the fort, since the cessation of the rains, and the whole scene was cheerful and pretty, as we passed it on our way to Colaba. When we came near the lighthouse, I was full of glee to think of the pleasant surprise we should give old Tom. I ran up the staircase, and saw a man preparing to light the lantern. Hearing a sound, he turned, and I saw he was a stranger.

"I came to see Tom," I said, almost crying with disappointment; "where is Tom Stubbs?"

"Tom's been very ill, little lady," replied the stranger, "a'most at death's door, they say."

"Tom ill!" I exclaimed, "and I never knew it! Poor dear Tom! He was so good when I was ill, and I never knew about him."

"It's not long ago," the strange sailor said, "and he's better now, miss. He's a-sitting down there on the rocks," and he pointed to the rocks down below, where I had formerly so often sat. I ran down to my father, who was just preparing to follow me up to the lantern, and told him the news I had heard. We

went together to the place where the old sailor sat, leaning against a stone, thoughtfully smoking his pipe.

He was so altered, that, but for the peculiarity of his features, I should scarcely have recognized him. He knew me, however, instantly, and started up to receive me with an exclamation of delight, as I put my hand in his.

"Why, missy," he said, "you're welcome as flowers in May. I was a-thinking of ye at the moment. That's queer, ain't it? but I often think of ye, only I haven't been able to come over and see ye this long time."

"We are very sorry to find you have been ill, Mr. Stubbs," said my father. "We should have managed to come and see you sooner, if we had known it. Why did you not send to tell us?"

"Why should I trouble yer honour? Thankee kindly, all the same. It's nearly been all up with old Tom, missy, and they're going to send me home to England, but I'd never have gone without another sight of the little face. And how's madam and the baby? You see, missy, I've took care to hear about ye. They told me about the grand wedding the other day. Ah! she was one of the right sort, wasn't she?"

We all sat down on the stones and talked over the events that had occurred since we parted, and then my father went to Captain Scott, to get leave for Tom to

come to us for a few days before starting for England, so we bade each other good night with the hope of soon meeting again. My mother was very much concerned to hear of the change in old Tom, and was as glad as myself when the old man appeared the following week, bundle in hand, to pass a few days at Malabar Hill. A room in one of the outbuildings had been made ready for him, with the few articles of furniture that are required in a tropical climate, and he seemed very happy to find himself with us again. Most part of the day he would sit in the verandah, carving with a penknife the model of a ship which was promised to me as a parting present, but he talked less over his work than he would have done formerly, and his laugh was far less frequent. He was unchanged, however, in his wish to be of use, and many a time Mrs. Armstrong would give him the baby to hold while she was busy with other duties. I could not help laughing the first time I saw Tom acting as nurse, and he was not at all offended.

"It do seem queer, don't it, missy?" he observed; "and I can't say I know very well what to do, for he an't come to the age when they likes to be chirruped to; but it seems to me, if you goes jiggety jog, jiggety jog, the little creatures are quite satisfied. It is queer, too, missy; for how should you or I like to be shook about like this? But this blessed little bein' is actilly

a-crowing and laughing at it. No, don't ye go and holler, my pretty man," continued Tom, in great trepidation, as the child made a threatening demonstration; "you'll trouble the mistress, if you go sounding your pipes. I'm almost afeard, missy, he's beginning to notice, and then in coorse he won't like my ugly old phiz."

However, the old sailor generally managed to keep the baby quiet, and grew very fond of the little creature during his stay.

"I ought to know how to mind a baby, ma'am," he said one day to my mother, who had been laid on a sofa in the verandah. "Once upon a time I had charge of one for a fortnight."

"How was that, Mr. Stubbs?" my mother asked.

"Well, this was how it was, ma'am. There was a poor young woman, a seaman's wife, died at New York when her husband wasn't there, and left a small baby. Her husband was away at sea, and all their relations were at Halifax, in Nova Scotia, where they'd both come from. There was a deal of talk about what was to be done with the baby, and I heard about it. Now it so happened that I and a boy was just going to take a little schooner up to Halifax. 'Give me the baby,' says I to the poor dead woman's landlady. 'I knows the family in Halifax, and I'll take the child.' Every one

cried out 'nonsense' on me, but I wouldn't be daunted, and so they gave me the little one. Well, ma'am, before I set out, I made a canvas bag, and hung it in the middle of the cabin, and I took a goat aboard; and as soon as I took the baby to the vessel, I popped it into the bag, gave it some milk out of a bottle; then up anchor and made all sail. We'd a rough passage that time, and no nurse would have dandled the baby as them stormy waves did. When I got a chance, I milked the goat and fed the baby out of the bottle, and the poor little thing crowed when it saw me come into the cabin. We was a fortnight on the way up, and I never had a happier day than when I put that child into its grandmother's arms, as fat and well as you could wish to see. I was little better than a boy myself at the time, but I never see a baby without thinking of that one."

"Nobody but a sailor would have managed so well or so kindly," my mother said, smiling.

"Thankee, ma'am," said Tom, evidently gratified. He seldom "spun yarns" now; but one day, when my lazy cat had roused herself, and was in the act of springing on a little brown bird with a feathery crest, he startled me by jumping up and seizing puss by the neck, while the bird flew away unscathed.

"It's all nateral," he remarked, as he returned to his

seat, after giving the cat an admonitory shake ; " It's all nateral, and one oughtn't to think harm of the cretur ; but cats are cruel beasts, and I can't abide to see them little birds harmed. Did you ever hear, missy, how they came to have their little crests ? "

" No, Tom," I replied : " what are they ? Tell me all about them."

" They're called hoopoes, missy, and a shipmate of mine that was given to book-larning, told me that hundreds of years ago, hoopoes had heads as smooth as most other birds ; but one day the great King Solomon was sitting on his golden throne in the land of Judah, and the sun shone down on his head ; and, as he was judging the people, he was not willing to go into his palace. Presently a flock of vultures came sweeping across the sky. You know them hideous bald-headed birds, missy, on the wall by the Parsee towers ? Well, the vultures had feathers on their heads in those days, but I suppose they had an evil natur, for when King Solomon asked them just to stop over his head a little while to keep off the heat, they said No, they couldn't wait. So King Solomon said they should have nothing ever after to cover their own heads from the heat of the sun. That's why vultures is bald, missy. Next came a flock of hoopoes. ' Will you stop and shade me from the sun ? ' says the King. ' That we will,' said the

hoopoes; and there they stopped as long as King Solomon wanted 'em. Then King Solomon called the king of the hoopoes, and asked what reward he would like to have for the service the birds had done. Says the king of the hoopoes, 'I'd like for me and all my people to have crowns of gold on our heads.' 'It shall be so,' says King Solomon; and from that day the hoopoes had golden crowns. But after a bit, when King Solomon was giving audience, the king of the hoopoes came hopping in, and asked to say a word. 'Speak,' says King Solomon. 'I did what you asked. What ails you now?' 'Oh!' says the bird, 'pray take back your gift, great king! The other birds are jealous, and they peck us; and men hunt us and kill us, that they may take our crowns of gold, and we are in such sad plight that there are but few of us left. Pray take back what you gave us, O King!' So King Solomon smiled and said, 'I thought it would be so' (for he was very wise, you know, missy); 'I will take away your golden crowns that have brought ye into trouble; but I'll give you crowns of feathers, to make you different from other birds, so that when men shall look at you they may say, "Those are the birds that were kind and willing to help."' It's all a made-up story, in coorse, missy, but it gives me a sort o'liking for them little birds, and I'd go a long way to save one of 'em."

Before Tom left us, Mr. and Mrs. Collier returned to the opposite house, and the old man was able to offer his good wishes in person. He was summoned rather suddenly to embark for England, but Mrs. Collier found time to supply him with many little comforts for his voyage. I cried bitterly when the moment of parting came, and the old man was scarcely less affected.

"God bless you, missy," he said, in a voice rendered still more husky by grief; "don't cry, there's a dear. Who knows but we may meet again, even in old England? Up aloft, missy, I humbly hope there may be a corner for old Tom, and I'll watch for your coming up there, deary, if I never see you again down below."

So saying, he entered the buggy with his bundle, my father drove him to the landing-place, and my old friend was gone. Mrs. Collier did her best to console me, but her time was, of necessity, just now much occupied in receiving and paying visits, and attending parties given in her honour. One evening, however, when I was strolling in the garden with my father, she and Mr. Collier joined us, and we all walked together up and down the broad path.

"We have just been arranging a pic-nic for to-morrow, Mr. Grantham," said Mr. Collier, "and we want you to join us and bring Clarissa. We are going to Kennery Island in the Commodore's yacht, and are

to dine on the top of the hill, and come back in a steamer. Pray come."

My father consented, after some persuasion. I heard him object at first on the score of what he called Indian punctilio, and I wondered what he could mean; but Mrs. Collier replied warmly, "I hope you will come as my friend, and the friend of my husband and father;" and then he replied, "I cannot say No to such an honour."



CHAPTER X.

BOMBAY.

THE following afternoon we went off in a boat to the yacht, on the deck of which a large party was already assembled, including Mrs. Farrer, who exclaimed, "Well! there you are, Anne, and I declare you have brought little Grantham." I looked round anxiously, thinking the twins might be there, but, to my joy, I heard Mrs. Farrer add, "I left my twins at home. I had enough of water-excursions with them on the Tannah river."

We sailed merrily along to our destination, and although the party had evidently been made for Mrs. Collier, and every one present treated her almost like a

queen, yet she never forgot me, but kept me near her all the day. We landed in a cove, and mounted a flight of rude steps cut in the rock, and bordered by walls of large stones piled one on the other. Above were walls of the same construction, tier above tier, pierced with holes for cannon, and at the top of the stair was a flat space containing a few scattered trees. The charm of the place was in the views it commanded, and in the freshness of the air on the summit of the hill. While the members of the party fell into scattered groups to explore the island, the servants, under the orders of Parsee John, spread a feast under the largest tree; and hither by and by the whole company flocked. The old pirate, Angria, whose stronghold this island once was, would indeed have been incredulous, could he have foreseen such a scene as was now being enacted within his innermost fortifications. There were many jokes about the popping of champagne-corks being a substitute for the guns that had disappeared from the ruinous embrasures around us; but, while enjoyment was at its height, and feasting had but lately begun, the red sun dropped into the western sea, and the brief twilight rapidly deepened into night. It was then discovered that no one, not even Parsee John, had thought of providing against such an emergency, and we knew it must be an hour yet before the moon rose. There was

a cry from the mortified John, and then his white garments vanished down the rocky stair, whence in a few minutes he reappeared, bearing two ship's lanterns, which he had obtained from the Commodore's yacht. These only made darkness visible; nor were matters much improved when Mr. Collier took the candles out, and stuck them each in the neck of a champagne bottle; but they were better than nothing; and laughter and conversation flowed on unchecked. By and by, glees and choruses were sung, sounding very sweetly in the still gloom. I crept very close to my father, and drew his arm round me, as I looked first on the group round the dim lights, their smiling faces just distinguishable, and John and his assistants silently removing the remnants of the feast; and then to the heavy ring of shadow that enclosed the whole group. I had a vague idea of horrible deeds once done in that pirate-haunt, and I longed to leave it to solitude and night. There was almost a shout of greeting from the assembled party when the moon at length showed her gracious face; and we prepared to return home. My father took me in his arms and carried me down the stair, and the rest stumbled down with the aid of the lanterns, to the little dark cove where the boats awaited us. We were soon steaming along towards Bombay, under a moon whose brightness rivalled the

daylight, and turned our track into a path of pearls and diamonds. I had nestled down on the deck close to Mrs. Collier, with whom my father was conversing, and, tired with the day's amusement, had nearly fallen asleep, when my attention was roused by the words I overheard.

"Does she know about the boy?" said Mrs. Collier.

"What, Almeria? No," replied my father.

"Don't think me impertinent," pursued Mrs. Collier, "but is it quite impossible that you should tell her of him yourself?"

"Quite," he answered with emphasis, and then both were silent for a time. By and by Mrs. Collier said, "I am afraid you are anxious, more anxious than usual. Do you think there is cause for it?"

"Only too much, I fear," he said very sadly. "Beale tells me we must not risk another hot season here, and I must send her home. He thought she would have picked up strength as soon as the cool weather came on, but you must see it is quite otherwise. She frets about it, on account of the expense, which is of course a serious consideration, but not to be thought of for a moment in comparison with her health, perhaps her life. It would be all over with me, if . . . but I can't think of it. What is your opinion? Don't you think English air would restore her?"

"I hope so—I think so," Mrs. Collier said kindly. "It would be a hard parting for you, but I think you would be glad afterwards."

"The old woman would go with her," my father continued. "She is devoted to her and the children, and she would never leave them so long as they needed her help. I have just obtained a step in the office, and it would be absolute ruin to me and them to go away."

"You must let us be all we can to you when they are gone," Mrs. Collier said. "I shall need comfort too, for the loss to me will be very great," and I felt her hand seek mine and grasp it, as she spoke.

"Ah! you have been a good friend to her, and she has had few friends in her life," my father said. "You have known what she is, her sweetness, her love, her patience." . . . He paused, and looked out over the sea.

"I have never seen any one so gentle, so unselfish, so uncomplaining, so tender," Mrs. Collier said. "I am thankful to have known her, and I shall love her all my life."

"Thank you; I like to hear you say so," he rejoined; and then some one drew near and interrupted the conversation. I was no longer sleepy, but I remained quite still, thinking over all I had just heard. Were they talking of my mother? were they fearful of her life? Were we going to England? Should we have to part

with my father and Mrs. Collier? These thoughts filled my head and heart, and damped the pleasure of that evening. Several days afterwards, Mrs. Collier noticed that I had become grave, and soon drew from me the cause.

"Poor little Clary!" she said, kissing me; "to say the truth, I think we forgot you were within hearing. It is true that we are anxious about your dear mother, but we are now only in December, and she would not be required to leave Bombay till March. Let us not meet sorrow half-way, but wait to see what is God's will, and meantime be as cheerful as we can."

"There was something else I heard you say," I observed, after a pause; and I repeated the remarks which she and my father had exchanged about Almeria and the boy. "Do you know the boy?" I asked; "and does papa know any thing new about him and the fairy?"

She looked puzzled and then replied, "You must not ask me about that, Clary: and do not say any thing on the subject to your father or mother. We will not talk of it any more."

I believe the subject returned to my thoughts many times in the next few days, though it gradually yielded to curious speculations as to our journey to England and our possible adventures in that country. A few

weeks later, a fresh cause of anxiety fell on those I loved. Mr. Collier was attacked with one of the fearful maladies of the country, and for several days very little hope was entertained of his recovery. My father sat up with him almost every night for a week, to induce Mrs. Collier to take some rest, for she had entire confidence in his skill and tenderness as a nurse. By day she never left her husband's side, and I could not even see her. I passed the mornings with my mother, and late in the day strolled in the garden alone or with Mrs. Armstrong and my little brother, watching for my father's return from his office. One evening, after I had passed a happy hour with him and my mother, he went across the road to inquire for the invalid, who had by that time so far improved as to give hope that he might rally. Presently we heard my father's step returning, and I went to the window to ask what news he had brought.

"Better," he answered, "much better. Mrs. Collier wants to see you, Clary; you must come directly."

I soon joined him, and we walked through the starlit gardens in silence. My father took me into the drawing-room and bade me wait while he went upstairs. I was dazzled with the blaze of the lamps, and awed by the thought of the trouble in the house, so I sat very still, and presently I heard a soft rustle outside,

and my dear friend entered, sat down, and took me on her knee. The shadow of the terrible anxiety she had been enduring was still on her white face, but her caress was full of tenderness.

"My little Clary, my little friend!" she said; "I wanted to see your wee face again. I know you have thought of me in my trouble, though I could not see you before."

"I was so sorry," I stammered, "so very sorry—but he is better, isn't he? He will get quite well now?"

"I hope so, I trust so, dear; but oh! Clary, I have been very unhappy," and for awhile she hid her face on my shoulder, and I felt that she was sobbing. She soon recovered herself, however, and looked up, smiling through her tears. "You see, dear," she added, "I have been so unhappy, that I hardly know how to be glad yet, but I am glad, nevertheless. I have something to say that will please you, Clary, and I sent for you that I might tell it to you with my own mouth. The doctors have decided that my husband must leave India for awhile, and I think we shall probably go to Egypt next month for a few weeks. I have been talking the matter over with your father, my brother Everard's friend, who has nursed my husband as tenderly as Everard himself would have done, Clary. We

think that we may be able to go in the same steamer with you and your mother, so we shall not have to part so soon as we expected, dear. Are you glad?"

"Very, very glad," I answered eagerly.

She kissed me, and then talked of our voyage and of my mother getting better in England; and went on to speak of her late trial as if she were thinking aloud. I understood from her almost unconscious words, something of the secret of her patience, something of the child-like faith that had sustained her, and I remembered it when my own sorrow came.

The days rolled on, and Mr. Collier continued to improve in health, though he was still very weak, and his hands were thin and transparent. The day of our departure drew very near, and Colonel Clay looked grave and sad at the prospect of parting with his daughter, though her absence was to be brief. One afternoon Mrs. Collier sent for me to go with her to see our cabins, and we picked up my father at his office, then drove to the end of the Apollo Bunder, or quay, where Colonel Clay had promised to join us. The breeze was coming in, and there was plenty to amuse us while we waited; two or three men-of-war with rigging tight and trim, crowds of merchant-ships, and boats without number.

"What is that boat waiting at the steps?" asked

Mrs. Collier. "Surely it must be for some great personage, it is so gay in its appearance."

My father asked a bystander, who replied that the Guicowar of Baroda, then on a visit at Bombay, was going on board one of the ships of war; and while the man spoke, a motley crowd approached at full speed. First came a party of running footmen, some with shields embossed with gold or silver; some with silvered spears, or jewelled daggers, or noisy tom-toms, or sticks covered with shining metallic rings that tinkled as they moved; but almost all with ragged garments, and toes peeping through their slippers. They were followed by an open carriage containing the Guicowar, a poor-looking little man, and his principal minister, large and stout, with a huge emerald, like a piece of green glass, stuck through a slit in his ear. These two dismounted and approached us, followed by a party from a second carriage, consisting of the three daughters of the Guicowar, little children of from two to six years, carried on the hips of gaily-clad bearers. These children were dressed in crimson silk, with skull-caps of kincob, or cloth of gold, and their arms were adorned with a profusion of bracelets. They were soon round us, their pretty little brown faces full of glee, holding out their hands for us to shake, and chattering in their native tongue. Mrs. Collier said a few words in praise

of the little creatures, and my father translated them to the Guicowar, who having no son, seemed to have more fondness for his daughters than the natives of India are accustomed to show. Presently, the whole procession moved towards the steps, tom-toms beating, rings jangling, and every one talking at the top of his voice. They filled two boats as they sailed away in their barbaric finery.

"Now you have seen a specimen of the native powers of India," observed my father.

"An unfavourable one, surely," replied Mrs. Collier. "I am afraid I found the whole party highly suggestive of May-day at home."

"Yes, it is a very unfavourable specimen," my father said. "The young man has been purposely brought up in ignorance and idleness to suit the purposes of his relations, and he is childish and silly. The gentleman with the emerald in his ear manages every thing: he looks astute enough for any purpose."

While the ships were saluting the Guicowar, Colonel Clay joined us, and we went on board the steamer and saw our cabins. On our way homewards, my father suddenly remembered an engagement, and begged to be set down near a bungalow we were passing.

"Perhaps you would like to come yourself," he added, addressing Mrs. Collier. "The daughter of the

man who contracts to supply our firm with casks, is to be betrothed this evening, and I promised to be present. The parents would be much flattered if you and Colonel Clay would come also, and I don't think you have ever seen a Parsee wedding."

We all left the carriage, accordingly, and soon found ourselves in a courtyard, which was lined with rows of Parsee men in their state-robes of full white muslin. Farther on, within a building lighted with many lamps and suffocatingly hot, the ceremony of betrothal was going on in the midst of a crowd of women in brightly coloured sarees, decorated with jewels, and all with nose-rings of pearls. In the centre of the room on two chairs sat the bride and bridegroom, aged respectively about six and eight years. The bride's arms were quite hidden with bangles, and her dress was a blaze of crimson satin and kincob. Her dark eyes moved wearily from place to place, and her pretty little hands twitched impatiently, as if she longed to go and play. As to the boy, his chin had sunk on his chest, and he was in a deep sleep, quite unconscious of the two priests, who, clothed in white, were throwing rice over the couple and reciting in monotonous tones either prayers or exhortations. The bride's mother looked proud and pleased. She had a soft pleasant face, and she wore a drapery of white damask richly

fringed with gold, while her armlets were nearly as numerous as her daughter's. We had bunches of flowers handed to us and sweetmeats wrapt in gilded leaves; and before we departed, we were required to drink the health of the young couple.

As we drove homewards, there was some talk of the entertainments given for the Guicowar, and my father mentioned a ball that was to take place the next evening at the botanical gardens, and said he had heard the Guicowar was to be there, not that such a circumstance would have any interest for Mrs. Collier.

"Let us go, Anne, nevertheless," said Colonel Clay; "not for the sake of that miserable native, but just to show you a very pretty sight. You cannot mind leaving Collier for an hour or two now he is so much better, and I am sure you would be amused. You will come too, Grantham, won't you? and bring your little girl to see the sight."

My father declined for himself, but it was finally settled that I should go for an hour with Mrs. Collier and Colonel Clay. I shall never forget what I saw. The gardens lie in a hollow where no breeze stirs the strangely beautiful tropical foliage. I had often been there in evening drives; and Mrs. Collier, struck by the stillness and beauty of the place, always called it Aladdin's garden, and would sometimes linger till the

moonlight lay on the great leaves of the fan-palm. But on the present occasion the whole scene was like fairy-land. Every path was bordered, every arch outlined with myriads of lamps. In an open saloon garlanded with flowers, pyramids of lamps rose in each corner, clusters of lamps hung from the ceiling. The figures that moved in this scene of enchantment seemed, to my young eyes, quite worthy of it; the ladies with their light floating dresses, the gentlemen mostly in gay uniforms. The musicians, hidden in a bower of leaves and blossoms, gave out sounds that filled me with delight. By and by, as we were preparing to go home, a number of fireworks were sent up among the taller trees, bringing into strong relief the varied beauty of leaf and flower that surrounded us. The large round moon was shining over the sea before we reached home, and my dreams that night were like a fairy-tale.

A few days later, I saw the same place again under the common light of day, with not a soul besides our own party to be found there, except a potter, who plied his wheel and moulded a lump of clay into rude flower-pots, as he sat under a pomegranate-tree. But it was Aladdin's garden still, with buds and bells of magical beauty, and fruits bright as jewels hanging on the trees; to say nothing of the palm called the "Tra-

veller's joy," which, when a slight incision was made below its great leaves, sent forth a gush of pure cool water that would have been priceless in the desert whence the tree had been originally brought.

Fortunately for us, the merchants who were my father's employers, found it necessary to send a confidential agent to Aden at this time, and they selected my father for the duty. The local government, too, required information on some question connected with the fortifications in progress at the same place, and Colonel Clay was ordered to repair thither, so we mustered a large party when the day of departure came. I remember that day well: the last drive through the palm-bordered roads, and the busy bazaars, with a sickly smell of musk and sandal-wood pervading the air, and then out on the open esplanade and past the fort, to the Apollo Bunder. I remember the confusion on deck when we reached the steamer, the tears, the anguish, as husbands and wives, fathers and children, bade each other farewell. I remember, as we steamed away, my last sight of Bombay, and the long low land of Colaba, with houses peeping among the trees, and the lighthouse gleaming white in the sunshine.

Our voyage across the Indian Ocean was very delightful, or would have been so, but for the querulous

invalids and spoiled children who were among the passengers. The evenings were especially lovely, and we lingered late on deck to enjoy the coolness, and to watch the wonderful white light that gleamed over the sea, or flashed like liquid fire from the paddle-wheels. My father showed me the Southern Cross on one of those evenings, as he walked the deck with me in his arms, in the same loving manner to which I had been ever accustomed. I was sorry when I thought that I was to part with him so soon.

"To-morrow evening we shall be at Aden, Clary," he said, after we had both been silent for some time; "to-morrow night I hope we shall sleep on shore; and the next day, Clary, we must bid each other good-bye. What will you be like, I wonder, when I see you again? Not a little 'weeny white rabbit' that I can carry in my arms; but, perhaps, a tall, dignified young lady, who will say, 'Who is that old gentleman? Pray introduce him to me.'"

"Nonsense, papa!" I cried, "I shall always know you, if you have your face all puckered up with wrinkles, and your hair all white and thin."

"Well, I hope we may meet before so great a change takes place, Clary," he said, smiling.

"I hope so, papa," I said. "Do come to England and see us very soon, or let us come back to you."

"God knows how it will be, Clary; I cannot tell," he answered, very gravely, and then we were both silent for a long time. When he spoke again, it was to bid me obey my mother in all things, and do my utmost for her comfort always. With my cheek on his, I made a promise which, thank God, I believe I had grace to keep.



CHAPTER XI.

ADEN, THE DESERT, AND CAIRO.



HE next evening we reached Aden, when the rugged peaks were but dimly visible against the sky. All our party landed, by invitation, and found rooms ready for them in the Resident's house, near the landing-place. The next morning I woke on a couch in Mrs. Armstrong's room, and could not at first imagine where I was, but I soon rose and went to the window, to ascertain whence came the sound of singing which reached my ear. I exclaimed with delight as I saw the hills, bare and rugged as they might really be, beautified and made to glow like amethysts by the glorious morning-light.

The sea sparkled gaily, and danced round the rocks on the shore, and the boats and ships beyond. The voices I had heard were those of the dark fishermen who were laying out their nets under the windows, swimming from point to point, and sometimes diving and remaining a long time under water, then reappearing on the surface, shaking their heads, and resuming their wild and not unmusical chant. I was so much amused in watching them, that Mrs. Armstrong called me sharply twice before I heeded her and began to dress myself. After breakfast, leaving my father and mother together, I went with Colonel Clay and Mrs. Collier to call on some friends of theirs who were a mile or two inland, at a place called the Camp, where are situated the houses of the officials and other inhabitants, in the crater of an extinct volcano. The whole country is made up of cinders, that crackle under the foot like the refuse of a blacksmith's forge. Our road was therefore sufficiently dreary. Some strange-looking animals, more like goats than sheep, with huge twisted tails that seemed almost too heavy for them to carry, were picking up a weed here and there on the hill-sides, while a wild Arab boy kept watch near them. At intervals we passed some of our fellow-passengers from the steamer, going to, or returning from, the Camp, because, as one of them remarked, "One must go somewhere, and there was

nowhere else to go." Mrs. Collier was full of pity for the dwellers in such a place, but Colonel Clay laughed at her.

"I assure you, Anne," he remarked, "I have known people praise it. They even learn to like the brackish water which you found so objectionable for your coffee this morning, and complain, when they go elsewhere, of the insipidity of purer springs."

"I dare say happiness can grow here just as those pretty little flowers—(do stop and let me get them, papa!)—grow on this scanty soil, but it looks a dreary place."

This was quite true, and yet I left Aden with a heavy heart, for here we bade my father farewell. It was at five in the afternoon that a message was sent from the steamer, to tell us the coaling was finished, and we must go on board immediately. My mother's face was whiter than ever, as she sat in the boat with her hand clasped in my father's, but she kept back her tears, and did not attempt to speak. When we reached the ship, my father took her down to her cabin, motioning to me to remain on deck, and I waited, crying quietly, beside Mrs. Collier, who, though she was talking to her husband and Colonel Clay, yet did not forget to give me a squeeze of the hand, to assure me of her sympathy.

"We shall soon be back again with you," she was saying to Colonel Clay, "and Godfrey is so well now, that ours will be only a pleasure-trip."

The anchor was up, all boats were ordered to leave the ship, and a scene of clamour prevailed. Some of the idle passengers were leaning over the side, tossing small coins into the water, to be dived for by the grinning fishermen, whose shrill cries added to the general confusion. My father came up the ladder, took me in his arms, and stood for a moment near Mrs. Collier, who said, as she gave him her hand, "Trust me, we will do all we can for them. We will see them safely through to Alexandria, if possible, and I will send you word how they fare."

"I know you will, God bless you!" he answered, in a voice very unlike his own: then, pressing me to his heart, he set me down on the deck, went over the side without looking back, and was soon far behind us. I remember with what a bitter cry I stretched my arms out towards his receding figure, and how tenderly Mrs. Collier soothed me. She soon took me to my mother, who welcomed her like a sister; and gradually the sad evening passed by.

The first half of our six days' voyage up the Red Sea was a time of distress to all on board, from the excessive heat of the weather. The sick and weakly

were fainting for want of air; the children screamed, and the strongest persons were in a state of misery, sitting under windsails that no breeze would fill. As we advanced, a north wind met us, and all things improved. We could now enjoy the gorgeous sunsets behind the African hills, that stood, purple, jagged, and broken, against the wonderful brightness of the western sky; and the moonlit evenings were unspeakably delightful. As we neared Suez, our talk was of the Israelites, and some one on board pointed out different spots noted in the sacred story.

At Suez, a friend of Mr. Collier's came off to fetch us in his large boat, as soon as our great steamer had anchored; and from the boat we were carried on shore, one by one, in a chair, by brawny Arab boatmen; and conducted to the large hotel. It was afternoon, and we had already dined, so we took a private sitting-room with a divan round the walls, and then Mr. Collier went to ascertain when our desert journey would begin. We looked disconsolate enough at first, in the midst of our bags and shawls, and baby wailed dolefully till my mother seemed inclined to cry with him; but presently Mrs. Collier settled her comfortably on the divan, took the baby, and hushed him to sleep, while Mrs. Armstrong, who was an experienced traveller, went to hunt up the materials for a comfortable tea,

and had set forth a tempting display by the time Mr. Collier returned. Before sitting down, he took us to a window overlooking the landing-place, where a crowd of Arabs were busy loading camels with the luggage from our steamer, slinging the boxes in coarse nets of rope, while the animals growled and grunted in vain remonstrance, as they knelt on the sands. Mr. Collier brought us one piece of good news. His friend had secured for Mrs. Collier a carriage belonging to the Pasha, instead of one of the rough little vans that were then used for the transit across the desert, and this vehicle was of so large a size that it would contain us all; but we were not to set forth till midnight, on account of some difficulty about horses. Before dark, while the invalids rested, Mrs. Collier and I went up to the flat roof of the hotel, to see the sands stretching away north, and east, and west, and to talk of the wonders of the Red Sea while its waters were still in our sight.

At midnight we were called from slumbers rendered very uneasy by the variety of insects that were buzzing, biting, and stinging about us, and conducted to a courtyard where a huge English carriage awaited us. A crowd of swarthy Arabs were round it, gesticulating violently, and talking in tones that seemed those of fury, though Mr. Collier assured us it was only their

usual manner of speech. Some of them were holding pans, formed of iron bars, on the top of long poles, and filled with blazing logs, whose fitful light danced over the faces of the crowd; some clung to the six horses, wild-looking as themselves, and harnessed with rope to our vehicle. One van was to accompany us; all the rest were already gone. At last we were packed, the driver mounted his box, the postilion was on the leader, and we moved off across the sand. In a few minutes the glare of the torches and the shouts of the crowd were far behind us, and the mysterious Desert stretched away to the right and left, just visible by the light of the newly risen moon.

In spite of the strangeness of the circumstances, I was soon lulled to sleep by the movement of the carriage, and only woke occasionally, when we stopped to change horses at the different stations. I remember with what a hollow sound the wind came sweeping over the sandy plain; and how wild a cry, reminding me of the jackals in India, was sometimes borne to our ears while we paused. The same loud chattering, the same pans of fire, the same crowd of dark faces, occurred at every station. The grey dawn broke at length, and the sun rose with burning heat, for the shamseen,—the hot wind,—was blowing, and we were obliged to keep the carriage-windows closely shut, though even then

our faces and hair were powdered with fine dust. At one station we breakfasted at a table spread with cold geese, cold ducks, cold fowls, and English cheese. As we toiled on afterwards over the sandy flats, flushed, and thirsty, and tired, I suddenly saw at some little distance, a lovely blue river, with palm-trees tossed by the wind, growing on its banks. The sight filled me with an inexpressible longing for the cool fresh water, and my exclamations called the attention of the whole party to the agreeable scene. We saw it for several minutes, and then, even while I was imploring Mr. Collier to make the men drive us nearer to those green, shady banks, a tinge of yellow came through the blue, the trees faded into air, and nothing was left but the hot sand with the hot air floating above it. I rubbed my eyes in amazement, while Mrs. Collier laughed as she exclaimed, "There, Clary! you have really had a glimpse of fairy-land: you have seen the mirage of the Desert."

At the central station we paused for some time; and while the invalids lay down to rest after dinner, Mrs. Collier and I placed ourselves near the window, trying to believe the air was growing cooler. Through the archway in front, we could see the palace, then lately built by Abbas Pasha, crowning a sandy hill; and while we looked, we became aware of a number of

figures moving thence towards us, across the intervening plain. Nearer and nearer they approached, till we saw them distinctly: Arab soldiers in bright dresses, well mounted and well armed, surrounding a green chariot, in which reclined the enormous person of the Pasha himself; two white dromedaries, with trappings of red velvet, and riders gaily clad; and a troop of youths belonging to the household,—gay wild boys, who rode beautiful horses, and challenged each other to many a mad gallop on the sand. The carriage paused that the Pasha might speak to the station-master, and I had a horrible dread that he might be going to take away our comfortable vehicle, if it had been lent without his permission. No such sad catastrophe occurred, however. A beautiful charger, white as snow, was led near, the Pasha left the carriage, mounted his horse, and the whole bright party swept away again towards the palace, leaving us in doubt whether their appearance had been a reality.

“Was it another mirage, Clary?” Mrs. Collier said. “We are on enchanted ground, and one hardly knows what to believe, little one; but I am glad we saw that fine sight.”

Now and then, as we travelled on, we met a line of dromedaries, heavily laden, tramping wearily along; sometimes, a few Arab families moving with all their

worldly possessions; or a handsome scheik, all green and gold, with a few followers, mounted on spirited horses. Occasionally, the skeleton of camel or horse by the wayside would remind us of the perils of the road, but on the whole, the daylight portion of our journey was sufficiently cheerful. Yet we hailed with delight the buildings of Cairo, the green trees and strips of cultivation that showed we were drawing near to the Nile. Patches of weeds and tufts of camel's-thorn we had often passed in the Desert, but this wealth and radiance of green we now saw before us, could only be produced by the waters of the great river. By four in the afternoon we were established at Shepherd's Hotel, in large rooms that overlooked the Esbequier Gardens, and here we were to remain, to give my mother a fortnight's rest before proceeding on our way. This fortnight was a time of intense enjoyment to me, and I soon felt quite at home in the narrow streets, crowded with camels, donkeys, and foot-passengers; or in the gardens, where groups sat on the ground listening to a tale-teller, who, with much action, was probably relating the story of the princess that ate rice with a bodkin, or some other legend from the Arabian Nights; and musicians with oddly shaped instruments made monotonous sounds that were pleasant and not unmusical, while their audience sat on the ground, sipping sherbet. Mr. and Mrs. Collier.

took me with them to see many of the sights of the city. Our first expedition was to the citadel, whence we overlooked Cairo, with its strangely mingled variety of palaces, ruins, and mosques; the woods of date-palms; the wide river with its lovely banks,—a green-bordered ribbon winding among the sand;—and far away on the yellow plain, those wonderful pyramids, which seemed to grow in size and in interest while we looked upon them; and farther yet the illimitable Desert. By and by we visited the Pasha's palace close by, very splendid in my eyes, with its damask divans, and chandeliers of coloured crystal. Mrs. Collier was more delighted with the still unfinished mosque, begun by Mehemet Ali. The building was lined with veined alabaster, and the double columns of the cloisters were of the same exquisite material.

"I have heard," Mr. Collier said, as we stood under the vast dome, still disfigured with scaffolding, "that Mehemet Ali believed he could not die till the mosque was finished. Some feeling of remorse for the massacre of the Mamelukes perhaps prompted him to build a temple here; but he will have mouldered in his grave many a year before this building is finished."

"Do you know, I saw Mehemet Ali a very short time before his death," observed Mrs. Collier. "He was cruising about the Mediterranean by desire of his phy-

sicians at the time I was on my way to India, and he landed at Malta, and was taken to visit the Governor on the very day that our steamer was coaling at Valetta. My friends took me with them to the court of the Governor's house, and we saw the old Pasha carried up-stairs in a tarnished velvet sedan-chair that might have been a state conveyance in former days of the Grand Master of the Knights of St. John."

"Did you see his face?" asked Mr. Collier.

"Yes, very distinctly, and a strangely acute face it was, with the burning, restless eye of a caged wild beast. His pictures are very like him, except that no picture could express that fierce, terrible eye."

We went afterwards to the mosque of the Sultan Hassan. The great gate of entrance was surmounted with fretwork, that reminded my companions of stalactites on the roof of a cavern. Within, was the usual square court, with a fountain in the centre, and a large apartment beyond it; but my attention was most excited by an inner chamber under the dome, where stood the tomb of the founder of the mosque. Near this, our guide pointed to some dark stains on the pavement, and told a long story which Mr. Collier interpreted for us. The tale was to this effect:—The great Mameluke Sultan Hassan, having gone into a far country on business, the Vizier left in charge of the government, usurped the

supreme power, and refused to resign it when his former master returned. Hassan therefore departed, unfriended and alone, and the usurper remained on the throne. When many years had passed by, there came to Cairo a rich and holy Dervish, who declared it to be his intention to spend his wealth in the erection of a mosque; and thus rose the largest and stateliest mosque in the city. When it was finished, the usurper and all the inhabitants were invited to a grand feast of consecration, in the very midst of which the Dervish threw off his dark robe, and showed himself to be the long-lost Hassan. He clapped his hands, and a crowd of armed men rushed in, seized the traitorous Vizier, and killed him before his master's eyes, while the people joyfully returned to their allegiance. In proof of the story, did we not see the stains on the pavement? I must say I looked with added interest, after this tale, on Hassan's simple marble tomb within its railing, and longed to touch the illuminated copy of the Koran that lay upon it.

Another of our expeditions was to the mosque of Amur, the oldest of all the four hundred mosques of Cairo, and now ruinous. Its numerous marble pillars are said to have been taken from the remains of the Egyptian Babylon, built by the Romans near this spot, — the Babylon whence St. Peter wrote his first Epistle.

In one part we found two pillars very close together, rubbed to a glossy condition by the struggles of enthusiastic Mussulmen to force their bodies between them ; it being believed that only the faithful can accomplish the feat. We did not see any attempt made, and it was difficult to suppose that even the thinnest of men could get through the difficult test. Returning hence, we passed through various cemeteries, and stopped to enter a beautiful Saracenic tomb, to which once a year the family of the dead repaired to dwell for a week, and meditate, I suppose, on the world to come. The tomb consisted of three or four chambers, in the largest of which was a raised marble mound, with five narrow stones planted at the head, all covered with Arabic letters of red and blue, and the central one surmounted with a silken turban. Through a large window, filled, like most of the windows at Cairo, with a delicate fretwork of carved wood instead of glass, the evening sunshine streamed down on this picturesque grave. The rest of the family tombs were in a little court beside a well. Hundreds of similar edifices were on every side, rising from the dry yellowish sand. The tombs of the Mameluke Sultans are a series of beautiful temples on another side of the city. It was strange to pass from the bustling streets full of life, to this other city of silence and death ; and especially so, when, on

one or two occasions, some of the idle boys had called out that we were Nazarenes, and thrown stones after us as we passed along the road. On a near approach to the Mameluke tombs, however, they are not found to be solitary, for many a poor Arab family finds shelter there, and the universal demand for "baksheesh" resounds in the burial-place of kings.

I hardly remember even the names of the many mosques we saw. One of those that pleased us the most was that named after the brothers Hassan and Hoseyn. A little black dwarf in a yellow turban was perched on a post at the door, with a string of beads, which he seemed to use as a rosary, chanting his prayers the while, and bowing from side to side till I thought he would fall to the ground. In the covered court within the mosque, many-coloured carpets and mats were laid on the floor, and on one of these a teacher sat with his scholars in a ring about him, dressed in garments of every colour, and chanting as loudly as the little dwarf in the street. The shrine was closed to Christian eyes, and was said to contain relics of peculiar sanctity, even the head of one martyr, and the hand of the other. I must mention one other mosque, because few travellers are allowed to enter it, and we were only admitted by special favour, led by the consul's silver-sticked cawass, and guarded by sundry

officials. Our coming was evidently unwelcome, and we were so hustled at one time, that our guards found it necessary to make vigorous use of their sticks. I speak of the mosque of El Azhar, a combination of college and temple. The outer court was thronged with people of many nations, belonging to the creed of Mohammed. There were even several Cairene ladies in their black silk robes, narrow white veils, and yellow slippers; while dark Moors sat on the edge of the fountain, mending the ragged outer garments of which they had just divested themselves. Solitary figures of all ages, from grey hairs down to early childhood, sat against the pillars that surrounded the court, chanting like the little dwarf, with body swaying from side to side; or getting portions of the Koran by heart. Here, a master was teaching the elements of knowledge to a ring of boys; there, an old blind beggar felt his way to a favourite nook, or a group of black Africans chattered loudly together, and showed their white teeth. As we left the court, our guide led us into one of the many chambers that surround it, and we paused to look at a living picture. The light fell from a high window on an old man, probably a Circassian, from his fair complexion. His turban was white, his long white beard fell over a dress of palest brown, and he sat on a Persian carpet of the richest colours, cross-legged, his

eyes closed, his attitude one of profound contemplation. Beside him, and equally motionless, on another prayer-carpet, but bent with his forehead on the earth, was a man clothed in white. The contrast between these still, absorbed figures, and the noisy scene we had just left, was too striking to be ever forgotten. We were hurried out through the arches, with their pretty suspended lamps, as the people were beginning to be disturbed at the presence of the "Nazarenes," and giving audible signs of dissatisfaction.

I was obliged to be content with a distant view of the pyramids, but we made two or three pleasant excursions outside of the city. One of these was to the gardens of Shoobra, the road to which is on the borders of the Nile, and shaded by an avenue of acacia-trees, while the gardens themselves are fragrant and delightful, with fanciful summer-houses and fountains, like the garden of the Sleeping Beauty.

Another time we went to the Island of Rhoda, where Ibrahim Pasha had made a lovely garden, already becoming a wilderness since his death. In one place, Mr. Collier pulled aside heavy boughs laden with cinnamon-roses, and bade me look over the wall, and see the spot where Moses was found by Pharaoh's daughter. It might have been the place, but the bulrushes were all gone!



A Scene in the Mosque of El-Azhar.

During those happy days at Cairo, we went to see the Greek convent, which boasts the highest staircase I ever ascended. From the topmost chambers, where we rested, while an old woman brought us coffee, the view was, however, magnificent. A handsome old monk, in a brown robe and with a black cap,—one of the few remaining inmates of the convent,—took us into the chapel, which is small but very old, and adorned with many pictures. One of these was most peculiar. It represented the Judgment-day. The Judge and the Apostles sat on thrones along the top of the canvas: in the centre was a crowd of men and women, some aided by angels to mount upwards: and, in the lower part of the picture, was a huge dragon's head sending out flames and smoke, while near the open mouth stood a number of demons, throwing nooses over individuals among the central crowd, and pulling them into the flames. The picture looked very old, and we examined it with great interest. The chapel was dedicated to St. George, and there was a very odd representation of his combat with the dragon. A supposed portrait of him in armour, with large sad eyes, pleased us very much. While we were examining these things, and Mr. Collier talked to the old monk, a lady came into the chapel, followed by her servant. She took off the great black robe that had covered her whole figure,

and handed it to her follower, and we saw that she was young and fair, wearing a lilac dress, and pearls plaited into her flaxen locks. She did not seem to see us, but went near the screen which (as in all Greek churches) hid the altar from us, kissed the inlaid woodwork, and knelt for some time, praying silently. We left her still praying, with the servant standing stolidly in the background, when we stole softly away. In the Coptic church to which we afterwards repaired, (passing through the dirty Coptic quarter, where the people seemed pleased to see us, and even patted our shoulders as we passed,) we saw an underground cave, which is said to have sheltered the Holy Family when they fled from Herod. The Copt who showed us the building, carried me through a trap-door, and down a narrow stair to see this rocky recess, and I was not sorry when we returned to the light of day. The church was small, with a handsome altar-screen inlaid with ivory.

Our last trip was to Heliopolis, the "On" of Scripture. In a garden of lemon-trees, with runnels of water perpetually supplied from the well near the gate, and bordered with lettuces and other fresh green vegetables, stands a solitary obelisk. The hieroglyphics with which its surface is covered, are filled up in parts by dried honey-combs, around which the wild bees may

even now be heard to buzz. Their hum, the running of the water, and the droning of the water-wheel as the ox treads his rounds, are the only sounds to be heard in that pleasant place. The Arab who showed it to us had as a companion, a little grey monkey with a gold ring in its ear, and he was highly gratified by our notice of the little creature, which took my offered hand and stepped down from a bough, like a dainty lady stepping from her carriage. Some more obelisks had lately been discovered beyond the bounds of the garden, and they were still half covered with sand. We walked across fields to the garden of Matarieh, and were instantly attacked by some boys for "baksheesh." The garden, however, was very charming, with hedges of rosemary and bowers of citron-trees; and as at Helio-
polis we had talked of Joseph, the son of Jacob, who married a daughter of Potipherah, the priest of On, so here, in these lovely shades, we spoke of the other Joseph, who brought the Holy Child and His mother into Egypt: for in the midst of the garden of Matarieh is a sycamore-tree, said to have afforded shelter to the Holy Family. The vast trunk is now like a rock, from which young branches grow, and we tried hard to believe it might be as old as the legend pretended. The great water-wheel was at work here also, and we lingered for awhile to watch the stream flow into the

channels beside trees and plants, carrying freshness and verdure with it.

We spent some pleasant hours in a museum of Egyptian antiquities collected by a Dr. Abbott. Here were mummies of human beings, bulls, apes, cats, and birds; the human heads covered with long reddish hair in silken plaits. There was a mummy-case, empty, except for a few tough lotus-leaves that lay within it, dark and shrivelled; and to this Dr. Abbott called our special attention. The case showed us a model of the face of its former occupant, the features regular, and the colouring fresh and bright as if laid on yesterday; and yet this was the coffin of a priestess who had been contemporary with Joseph and his brethren. Dr. Abbott told us he had tried to unwrap her mummy, but it fell to dust when touched, and no relic remained of the beautiful priestess, but a few of the dead lotus-leaves that had formed her wreath.



CHAPTER XII.

THE GREAT SORROW.

WE passed our Easter at Cairo : in the quiet mornings I read aloud to my mother the narrative of the Plagues of Egypt ; and on Easter Sunday I went with Mrs. Collier to the little English chapel. The windows were, of course, open ; and during the service, several white doves flew in and perched themselves above the altar, where they remained to the close, cooing softly, but causing no interruption.

On our arrival at Cairo, Mr. Collier had engaged an Arab attendant, who (having made the pilgrimage to Mecca incumbent on a good Mussulman) was called

Hadji, or Pilgrim, Selim. This man was very useful to us as guide and interpreter, when Mr. Collier's knowledge fell short of our needs, and one of his duties also was to wield a fly-flapper incessantly during our meals, otherwise the food would soon have been blackened with the myriads of flies that settled on it. *Hadji* Selim took us to the bazaars, and endeavoured to stir up the merchants who sat, cross-legged and indifferent, among their wares, to condescend to pay some attention to our wishes. Without him, we should never have obtained the pretty embroidered slippers, turned up at the toes, which I have kept to this day in remembrance of Cairo. He was to go with us to Alexandria, whither Mr. and Mrs. Collier had long since expressed their intention of accompanying my mother. She, poor soul! had seen but little of the wonders of the city; but she used to lie on a divan, and watch the crowd in the Esbequier gardens, the donkeys with their gay trappings, and the camels grumbling as they knelt to receive their load, or trudging quietly along when once laden. Of Cairo, with its four hundred mosques and sixty-nine gates, its palaces with pretty wooden lattices, and its crumbling ruins, this was all that she saw.

At eight o'clock one lovely morning we left Cairo, on the deck of a steamer, with a motley crowd of

passengers. As we pushed off, a troop of beggars, most of them afflicted with blindness, so frequent in Egypt, shouted aloud for "baksheesh," from the landing-stairs, and one old woman, attired in the usual dark blue dress of the country, shook her lean arm and screeched after us as long as we were within hearing. Then we began to observe our fellow-passengers. There was an old French nun in a dress of white serge, a Sister of Mercy, on her way from Cairo to visit the parent convent at Angers; a kind, gentle-mannered woman, who was ready to help every body. There was the wife of a foreign consul with her affected daughter, both dressed in the height of Parisian fashion, and accompanied by the old mother of the former, a Greek lady of portentous size, who made it her business to inquire into the affairs of every one else on the steamer. She wore on her head a fez, or cap of scarlet cloth, with a blue silk tassel, and around the cap was arranged a plait of grey hair, with a cockade of blue muslin pinned in the front. Her dress of striped Brusa silk set loosely over a habit-shirt of plaited white muslin, and she wore white cotton stockings, and heavy shoes with steel buckles. Besides these people and a German botanist from the mountains of Abyssinia, there were several parties of English returning from the Nile trip, some of them so lively,

that I heard Mrs. Collier remark, their animation was quite refreshing after the languor of the Anglo-Indians to whom she had been accustomed of late. As the hours wore on, and we grew weary of watching the banks, (monotonous and flat after passing the unfinished "barrage" for damming up the waters of the Nile,) the villages of huts, the woods of date-palms, and water-wheels worked by bullocks or camels, the peculiarities of our fellow-passengers were observed with more interest; but by degrees this amusement also was exhausted, and we wished the old Greek lady were less inquisitive, and her granddaughter less lively. It was even a grief to us that the consul's wife peeled her orange at dinner with the same knife with which she had just cut large pieces of cheese and put them into her mouth. We were tired of every thing, even of the boats with their double sails like huge white wings, which had seemed beautiful in the morning; and the wedge-shaped flocks of wild geese passing like clouds far above the Nile. But the long day came to an end at last; the sun sank beneath the low western bank of the river, and the stars came softly out. I had fallen asleep on deck, when, at about ten o'clock, the stopping of the vessel awoke me. In a few moments Mr. Collier was carrying me ashore, my mother following in the arms of a strong Arab, with

Mrs. Collier exhorting the man to be careful, in words which he probably did not understand, and Mrs. Armstrong bringing up the rear with my little brother in her arms. We were leaving the Nile steamer for the canal-boat, a long narrow vessel drawn by a little steam-tug; and a number of porters, laden with luggage, were soon rushing wildly from one boat to the other, in the darkness, along the uneven shore. A torch here and there only added to the confusion, which was not lessened by the shouts of the old Greek lady for her boxes, and her granddaughter's anxiety for her lap-dog.

By and by the transfer was complete, the boat glided on, and we had time to observe our whereabouts. We were in a cabin styled by courtesy, the "ladies' saloon," furnished with two deal tables and a divan covered with carpet, the whole illuminated by a single candle with cauliflower-wick, stuck into a dirty brass candlestick. The old Greek lady screamed aloud to let every one know that her bundle of shawls, especially provided for this occasion, as she knew the nights were chilly on the water, had been put into the hold under all the luggage. Her wailings so disturbed my mother, that Mrs. Collier lent her a cloak, and induced her to use one of our carpet-bags as a cushion. This put her into better humour, but she chattered in a loud voice till

three in the morning, and would not let any body sleep; and when at last she dozed, her snoring was almost more annoying than her conversation had been. We were thankful when morning released us from our prison, and we could go on deck. At length we sighted the broad surface of Lake Mareotis, with its desolate rushy shores, and before we reached Alexandria, every one crowded up from below. The lively young lady was there, with her lap-dog on her arm; but in the midst of her conversation with the German botanist, she recollected she had left her smelling-bottle in the cabin, and flew to seek it, having first turned to Mr. Collier, who sat near, plunged in thought, and exclaiming, "Pray take care of this for me," deposited her precious dog in his lap. His dismay diverted us all, and she remained so long absent, that he had ample time to become acquainted with the vicious temper of the animal.

We landed at last amid the usual turmoil; donkeys and donkey-boys, groaning camels, and noisy porters. Some kind of vehicle was found for my mother, and we were soon established at Ray's Hotel, where we were to await the next English-bound steamer. The wide, hot streets and squares were far less interesting than those of Cairo, though a bridal procession we met on our way from the boat,—the bride so wrapped

in shawls, that she could scarcely move under the gay red canopy held above her head,—reminded us of the place we had left. During the next few days, we saw all the sights of the neighbourhood, stood under Pompey's Pillar, lingered near Cleopatra's Needle, to look over the blue bay towards the castle of the Pharos; and, lastly, I went with Mrs. Collier to visit the harem of a member of the Pasha's family. The lady we visited was a Circassian by birth, fair, tall, and graceful, with blue eyes and brown hair. Over her gold-coloured dress she wore a loose pelisse of green, trimmed with sable, and on her head was an embroidered cap with a handkerchief tied round it. She received us standing, in a room with walls painted in Arabesque, and divan covered with embroidered satin. After an exchange of compliments through a lady who acted as interpreter, every one sat down, and an attendant brought in some long pipes. To my amazement, I saw one of these given to Mrs. Collier, who applied its mouthpiece of amber, set with brilliants, to her lips, and sent forth a cloud of smoke. Presently a pretty stool, inlaid with mother-of-pearl was placed before us, and a tray set thereon with tiny cups in golden stands, filled with black coffee, of which even I was expected to partake. I thought it worse than any physic I had ever tasted, but the eye of the beautiful princess was upon me, and

I swallowed it. Perhaps my effort pleased her, for the lady-interpreter announced that the adopted child of the house had been sent for, that I might be introduced to her. She came, a bright-eyed fairy in outlandish dress, and I was called from Mrs. Collier's side to be presented to her notice. I fear I disgraced my good-breeding, for when I saw that the eyes not only of the princess, but also of every one of the smiling attendants, were fixed on me, I fairly ran back to Mrs. Collier, and clung to her arm, refusing to leave it any more, in spite of her whispered entreaties. This circumstance brought our visit to rather an awkward termination, and has left a sting in the recollection of it.

Meantime, we hourly expected the steamer that was to take us away; and one night, awakened by a sudden noise, I saw a lady and gentleman in the doorway, bag in hand, and heard them say in desponding tones, "All full here." The next morning we heard that the Indian passengers had arrived from Cairo during the night, and that the English steamer was in the offing. A few hours later we were actually on board, and the moment was near when we were to part with our good friends. They had made every possible arrangement for my mother's comfort, and persuaded Mrs. Armstrong that the cabin assigned to us was not so *very* small as she had at first considered it. My mother was laid on the

sofa-bed, with a soft breeze blowing on her through the port-hole, when Mrs. Collier bent over her to say good-bye. There were whispered words which I did not hear, but in reply to them, my mother shook her head and said aloud, "No, dear; no more in this world! never, never!" Then there were more whispers, and Mrs. Collier turned away with tears running down her cheeks. She led me up on deck and sat down, taking me on her knee. I was sobbing bitterly now, and she did not attempt to check me; indeed, she seemed to find it difficult to speak.

"Clary, dear little friend," she said, at length, "there is one thing I must say to you before we part. Cling to your mother, Clary; never vex her, never grieve her; and remember, my child,—whatever may happen,—remember this; that as long as you live, you will never know any body better, nobler, wiser, with all true wisdom, than your mother—happy Clary, if you ever know any half as good! Bear this in mind, Clary, always, always, whatever may happen to you."

I clung to her, sobbing out a promise to remember her words. The time came, long afterwards, when I understood them better. A few moments later, and I was watching the boat that conveyed my friends back to the shore. My eyes were dry then; I was too miserable for tears; my childish heart seemed bursting

with sorrow. I saw Mrs. Collier turn and wave her handkerchief, and then I felt I must have sympathy, and I ran, almost falling headlong down the companion-ladder, to my mother's cabin, and found there the love and tenderness I craved. Even Mrs. Armstrong was very gentle with me, and spoke of Mrs. Collier as she seldom spoke of any one except my mother, regretting that we were no longer to travel in her company and her husband's.

There was some infectious sickness among the children on board our new steamer, and Mrs. Armstrong did not allow me to mix with them, so my voyage to England was uneventful and quiet. At Malta, where we remained in quarantine a few hours, some friends of Mrs. Collier's came off to us with new-laid eggs and fine oranges. Afterwards we had glimpses of the snow-clad summits of Mount Atlas on the African shore; and later, of the Spanish mountains, with towns and chestnut-woods in their hollows. At Gibraltar we stopped again for coal, but were still in quarantine, and could not land. The coast of Portugal was past, Cape St. Vincent with its ruined convent, and at length we were in sight of England. When we landed at Southampton, Mrs. Armstrong took charge of the party, and seemed to decide every thing, my mother passively yielding to her suggestions. Accordingly we pursued our way, as

soon as our luggage had passed the custom-house, to a little sea-side village in Hampshire, and took possession of some decent lodgings in a row of houses called Wellington-terrace. Our new rooms were very small, but the windows looked on a strip of garden-ground where a few trees and shrubs struggled for existence, and beyond this was the shingly beach, over which it was my delight to watch the waves roll day after day.

My recollections of the next three years are far less distinct than of the scenes I have already described, for there was little variety to mark the flight of time. For awhile my mother rallied, and was able to move about the house and even walk on the sands, but the improvement was short-lived, and she soon resumed her invalid habits. I was sent to a day-school at the corner of our terrace, but it was from my mother that I derived the most valuable part of my education. Meanwhile, my little brother grew and prospered. He learned to walk on the strip of sand the tide left bare below the shingle, and he was the pet of all the boatmen who loitered about the shore. He was left to their attention more and more, for Mrs. Armstrong was required at home.

All this time, my father remained in India, and though we heard from him often, we had no hope of his coming home. His letters recalled to me the old days at Bombay, which otherwise might have seemed like a

dream. From my dear Mrs. Collier we also heard at no distant intervals. She had not been without anxieties of her own, for Mr. Collier's health had never been so good since the illness that preceded his journey to Egypt, and as they went at the proper seasons to Poonah and to the hills, spending only the cool weather at Bombay, they saw less of my father than formerly. Towards the close of the third year of our separation, Mr. Collier was ordered to the Cape of Good Hope, and thither his wife accompanied him, with the two infant children who had been born to her meantime. She wrote us glowing accounts of the climate and the scenery of the Cape, where she was to remain two years.

So the days passed quietly on for me in Wellington-terrace, Shrimpton. I had little to say to my school-fellows after lessons were over, for they had had rougher nurture than I, and were of a ruder sort than I liked ; so little Charlie, my brother, was almost my only play-mate, and my mother my only friend. Mrs. Armstrong was sharp with me, as of old, but I had learnt to like her better for the love she bore my mother. She still did all the household work for us, and relieved my mother of all trouble, stitching busily at our clothes when not otherwise occupied for us.

One afternoon in April, three years after our arrival

in England, I was returning from school with my little bag of books in my hand, singing idle snatches of a nursery-song that Charlie liked, when I saw Mrs. Armstrong standing at our door and beckoning to me to hasten home. "Go to your mamma, Miss Clarissa," she said, as soon as I reached her. "She has had letters from India, and she wants to see you."

I threw down my books in the passage, and softly opened the door of our little parlour. The scene rises before me now: the room with its bright paper, the chintz sofa drawn to the open window, whence between the muslin curtains might be seen a few low trees in the garden and the glancing sea beyond; the little table beside the couch, with its litter of papers and needle-work, and the bunch of primroses I had placed there the day before; and on the couch, her usually wan cheek flushed, her eyes bright and restless, and her thin hands clasped, lay my mother. As I looked at her, a sickening fear for the first time crept over me. I had been used to see her always ill, but to-day I trembled as I watched her. Perhaps she read something of my feelings in my face, for she kissed me with especial tenderness, and kept my hand in hers, as she made room for me to sit on the edge of her couch.

"I have had letters from papa, Clary," she said presently; "he is well, he says, and he writes more

hopefully than usual; but he was just going to set out on a long and, as I fear, perilous expedition. His employers wanted to send some person on whose judgment they could rely, to Thibet. It is some question about wool, I believe. Your father has volunteered to go, and if he succeeds in his mission, he expects great advantages to accrue to us all; but oh! Clary, we cannot get letters from him while he is away. This is the last letter, Clary, the very last!"

She hid her face for awhile, and I did not like to disturb her, but she looked up presently with a calmer face, and unfolding her letter, read to me the plan of my father's expedition, and made me fetch my atlas that we might trace his route on the map. Unconsciously we grew more cheerful over our employment, and when Charlie came in, bright and rosy, from his afternoon's sleep, he was received with smiles. Mrs. Armstrong's anxious looks brightened when she brought in our tea, and the evening was cheerful as usual; but as I lay awake at night, I felt the shadow of a great trouble on my heart, and when, about midnight, Mrs. Armstrong crept softly into the closet which I occupied, I sat up in my bed, and beckoned her to come to my bedside.

"What is the matter, Miss Clarissa?" she said, very softly. "You are waking late to-night."

I put my arm round her neck, and drew her ear down close to my lips, but even then I hardly knew how to put into words that which I had to say.

"Don't keep me, my dear," she continued, with unusual gentleness. "Your mamma may think there is something the matter if I don't go back soon. What is it, Miss Clarissa?"

"It is about her," I whispered, "it is about mamma. Oh, do tell me about her! Is she very ill? is she worse?"

"Why?" asked Mrs. Armstrong; "what makes you ask, my dear? Do you think she is weaker?"

"Oh! I don't know. I don't know!" I said, "but I thought of it to-day, and I am frightened. Is she very ill? Do you think she is very bad?"

"God knows," she answered, rubbing the back of her hand across her eyes. "The doctor says she isn't weaker, but I sometimes fear she is; and this trouble to-day has done her no good. You mustn't make an ado, Miss Clarissa. It's bad for her to be troubled about any thing, and you must keep your trouble to yourself. Let me go now."

"But tell me," I persisted, still clinging to the old woman's neck, "is she very ill, very, *very* ill?"

"I am afraid she is, Miss Clarissa, sadly afraid of it," was the reply; "but I hear her moving, and I must

go," and gently laying me back on my pillow, and giving me an unwonted kiss, she left me alone in the dark, alone with my grief. For awhile I lay like one stunned, and then I rose, and kneeling on the boards with my face buried in the bedclothes, prayed with passionate tears that God would spare my mother's life. I know not how long I prayed, but I woke at dawn still kneeling there, cold and dull, and crept into my bed to fall into a deep, dreamless sleep, that lasted till I was called in the morning. The wind had risen during the night, the sea was moaning hoarsely, and the rain pattering against the window. I should have been sorry for the bad weather at any other time, but to-day I did not care for it. What did it matter? what did any thing matter now? Who would help me? Oh! if only Mrs. Collier were in England! And then came to me the remembrance of my dear friend's last words to me, and of my promise on parting with her. Yes! I would keep it faithfully. I would not vex my mother I would do every thing I could for her as long as I might. I must not trouble her with my grief. So, when I had dressed myself, I knelt again and prayed not only for that precious life, but also that I might never be selfish and forgetful; and then I went down-stairs, and did not cry when the wasted hand took mine, and the dear wan face was lighted up with a smile of

welcome. After breakfast, when I was collecting my books before going to school, my mother said,

"It is so wet, Clary, I think you had better not go out. Will you mind staying with me?"

I need not say how gladly I stayed. In the afternoon came the only friend my mother had at Shrimpton, the clergyman of the village, an old man without wife or child. I was present during a part of his visit, and his gentle kindness made me determine to tell him of the heavy burden of sorrow that was pressing on my young heart, but I had no opportunity on that day.

I have not said much of my brother Charlie, who all this time was growing and strengthening into a beautiful boy. Mrs. Armstrong had trained him to be very good and gentle in the sick-room; out of it he was fearless and gay as any bird. We loved to trace in his bonny features a resemblance to my father, which, indeed, was very striking, and he was the subject of many a day-dream to my mother as well as to myself. His merry unconscious ways helped me to bear the burden of my sorrow, and cheered us all, in spite of ourselves. It was not long before I saw the old clergyman again. I was in the garden when he came out after a long interview with my mother, and he took me by the hand and said I should go home with him to fetch a book she wanted. As soon as we were out of

sight of our house, I stopped, and looking up wistfully, contrived to say, "What do you think about her, Mr. Walcot? Is she really so very, very ill?" and then my tears stopped my saying more.

"Poor child! poor little Clary!" he said gently; "don't cry so, my little woman. We must take patiently what Gods sends us. For *her* sake you must be good, my child."

I knew by his words that he took the same view of my mother's state as Mrs. Armstrong, and for awhile I could not be comforted. He was very gentle with me, and bade me apply to him whenever I wanted help, and never fail to send whenever my mother should wish to see him. By the time I left him to return home, I was calm again, and glad to think he would always be our friend.

I think I remember every hour of the next two months, but it was a time too sad and sacred for me to write of here. After the first fortnight I ceased to go to school, and shared with Mrs. Armstrong the duties of nursing the dear invalid and taking care of Charlie. I was already grave and careful beyond my years, and these weeks of watching, of hourly intercourse with one "wise with the truest wisdom," and whose pure spirit was passing into the light of a better world, made me almost a woman in thoughtfulness. No letters came

from my father: this was my mother's sorest trial now. She had several long conversations with Mr. Walcot, and these seemed to set her mind at ease about me and Charlie. She did not tell me all that passed between them, but she said Mr. Walcot had promised to take care of us, if letters which she had written should remain unanswered. Of these letters she spoke mysteriously, as if very doubtful of their effect, and she referred me to Mr. Walcot for advice, should any reply arrive after she was gone.

One night when I was sleeping soundly, after a day of unusual comfort and cheerfulness, Mrs. Armstrong's voice aroused me.

"Come at once," she said; "put this shawl round you and come. I will fetch Charlie."

Dazzled and bewildered, I rose and flew to the next room, meeting Mrs. Armstrong at the door with Charlie, his eyes half open, and his pretty curls all tumbled and rough. The end was come. Whispered blessings; an earnest exhortation to me to "take care of Charlie;" my father's name; and then the Holy Name that was the hope of that death-bed; and afterwards the hush of an awful stillness.

I cannot dwell on the terrible days that followed, indeed I remember but little, for my health had broken down for a time under the pressure of sorrow, and I

hardly knew what passed around me. At the end of a fortnight I was better, but I longed to be alone, so I crept out of the house when Mrs. Armstrong was busy, and out into the garden, where I hid myself among the trees, and lay on the grass, looking up through the boughs to the blue sky, and wondering whether my mother knew how unhappy I felt. This thought brought the ready tears to my eyes, and I cried unchecked for a long time. After awhile, I became aware that Mrs. Armstrong's voice was calling me; "Miss Clarissa! Miss Clarissa! where are you? you're wanted!"

As I listlessly rose from the ground, she came round the screen of boughs and caught sight of me. "Child, child!" she continued, "why did you come out here? You'll catch cold lying on the damp grass. You're shivering now."

"I'm not cold," I answered; "indeed it won't hurt me. What did you want me for?"

I had already put my hand in hers, and now she stooped down and kissed me. Sorrow had made her so much more gentle than formerly, that I was no longer afraid of her. She had grown much older in appearance, and her hair was almost white; any one could see how deeply she had suffered, and our common grief had drawn us together very closely.

"Ah! yes, you must come in now," she replied. "There is some one come for you and Charlie. You are to go away at once to a new home."

I scarcely heeded her words, but went with her across the garden. As we approached our own house, I fancied I saw, through the open window, a stranger fondling Charlie; but when we entered the little parlour, (which I never did now without a shudder, though the sofa was put back against the wall, and every thing as much changed in appearance as possible,) I found Charlie standing alone near the table, and a respectable-looking elderly woman seated at some distance from him. The woman rose as we entered, and Mrs. Armstrong said, "This is Miss Clarissa."

I looked up, and met the glance of a pair of bright black eyes set in a dark and wrinkled face, surmounted with bands of snow-white hair. It was a strange countenance, and did not seem to express any kindness towards me. "She is not the least like her papa," the stranger said, in a harsh voice; "the boy is the very image of him;" and she turned upon Charlie a look of interest and affection that quite transformed her unprepossessing features.

"She is like her mother," Mrs. Armstrong said warmly; "very like her in person, and I shall pray to

God every day that she may become like her in goodness, and patience, and holiness."

The stranger looked as if the subject did not interest her, and resumed her seat.

"I suppose," she presently remarked, "we had better settle at once what is to be done. Can the children be ready to go with me to-morrow?"

"Yes, as early as you like," was Mrs. Armstrong's reply.

"Then tell me, if you please, how to find my way to the clergyman's house," continued the stranger, "and I will relieve you of my presence for the present. I have spoken to your landlady, and she will give me a room here for the night."

"Very well, Mrs. Jenkins," said Mrs. Armstrong. "We have had our early dinner, but you can join us, if it please you, at our tea at six o'clock." She then pointed out the way to the Rectory, and the stranger walked gravely away. The conversation had roused my curiosity a little, and I asked Mrs. Armstrong what it meant.

"It means this, my dear," she replied, "that I must go and pack up your clothes at once."

"But who is that woman, and where are we going?" I asked, with increasing interest.

"That woman is Mrs. Margaret Jenkins, own maid

to Miss Bletworth, a friend of your papa's, Miss Clarissa, and she is going to take you to Daleford, to live with her mistress."

"But you will go with us?" I cried, in alarm.

"No, dear, I shall not go with you," she answered, somewhat drily; "I should not suit the place at all. I'm going to a poor sister of mine that has a hard struggle with her large family. She'll be glad to have me, and my duty's very plain to me now my darling is gone."

There were tears in her eyes now, but she soon wiped them away, as she added, "She was no kith or kin to me, but my child could hardly have been dearer, and I would have slaved for her little ones as long as my strength lasted; but there! they don't need it, and I must care for those of my own blood. I'm but a cross old woman, I know, and I've often been sharp with you, Miss Clarissa, but you mustn't forget me; and you'll talk to Charlie about me now and then, won't you, dear?"

I readily promised to do so, embracing Mrs. Armstrong with a degree of affection I had never shown or felt before. There was a great deal of business done before the return of Mrs. Jenkins, who came at tea-time, accompanied by Mr. Walcot. The old man called me into the garden and talked to me

eagerness to begin his journey, and I think this circumstance gave a special tenderness to the old woman's parting embrace to myself. To me, this farewell was the severing of another link with the past, and Mrs. Jenkins's treatment gave no encouraging promise of the future that was before us, so it was with a heavy heart that I saw the old familiar figure fade away, as we drove along the dusty road that was to take us to the nearest station, two miles from Shrimpton. The journey was exciting even to me, for I had never been on a railroad before, as we had travelled from Southampton to Shrimpton by an omnibus-coach on our first arrival in England. Charlie was wild and restless, but he seemed unable to weary Mrs. Jenkins's goodwill, while she treated me with supreme indifference.



CHAPTER XIII.

MYSTERIES.

AFTER a journey of three or four hours, our conductress informed us that we were to leave the train at the next station. It was all alike to Charlie, but I, being still weak, was growing very weary, and I rejoiced that my suspense would soon be over, and that I should see to what sort of home we were now to be consigned. The next time the train stopped, a servant assisted us to alight, and went to get our luggage, while Mrs. Jenkins led us to an open carriage that was drawn up close to the station. The old coachman, who seemed to have been dozing on the box, greeted Mrs. Jenkins, and then, as he looked at my brother, exclaimed,

“Well, to be sure! no need to ask *his* name! Why, he’s the very moral of Master Charlie, isn’t he? Well, I never! Welcome, Master Grantham,” he continued;

"I knowed your papa. And is that Miss Grantham? Ah! I see, I see . . . why it's as wonderful as t'other . . . the very pictur'."

I thought Mrs. Jenkins made him a sign to be silent; and then, saying that the servant could follow in the cart with the luggage, she proposed that we should at once go home: so the coachman gathered up his reins, touched the horses with his whip, and we were once more moving. It was a pleasant change from the railway-carriage, and I looked around me, as we swept along over the smooth road. We were in a very pretty country, with hills of some height clothed in fir, rising beyond meadows and wooded parks. At length we passed through a village lying under the hills, its cottages scattered among flowery gardens, and its green shaded with fine horse-chestnut trees. The children were just trooping into the school-house near the little church, and I saw the white dress of a lady fluttering down the path that led to the school from the rectory on the hill-side. The whole scene reminded me of Mrs. Collier's tales of her English life, and I could not help wishing our new home might be here, but I asked no questions, and the carriage still rolled onward, till the village was left behind. The same fir-clad hills were in the background, and below them an undulating and smiling landscape, with a little river winding

through the lowest meadows, its course marked by a double line of willows. We turned from the high-road into an elm-bordered lane, and soon reached a gate that gave entrance into a park, and was now opened for us by a woman who came out of a lodge buried to the very thatch in roses and honeysuckle. The woman nodded to Mrs. Jenkins, looked at us, and held up her hands with a gesture of astonishment, as she cried after us, "Well, in all my days, I never see such a likeness! He's the young master over again!"

My attention was roused by the words. Did they refer to my father? If so, we must be near our destination; and who was this Miss Bletworth of whom we had been told so little? Why were we going to her? These thoughts passed through my mind, as we drove on through the sunny glades of a noble park, catching glimpses of wooded dells where the deer were couching among the fern, and upland heights clothed in rich pasturage. The road swept round the base of a hill, and brought us to the shore of a lake, where we disturbed a pair of swans with a whole family of cygnets from the rushes on the brink, and sent them sailing over the blue water. Charlie clapped his hands with glee, as he caught sight of this fairy fleet; and when his excitement subsided, we were slowly ascending a hill crowned by a castellated house of great size. The vast front of

this building was of time-stained brick, partially hidden by ivy, and in the centre stood a high tower, before which we stopped, opposite to a large doorway. Was this our new home,—this house, like a palace, overlooking its own broad lands? What had we to do there, Charlie and I, little motherless strangers from over the sea, with a father wandering among savages thousands of miles away?

Some such thoughts as these flashed through my mind as I glanced at the glorious view from the terrace in front of the house, and entered for the first time the great iron-clamped door. Crossing a lesser chamber, which formed the base of the tower, we passed under a second arch into a magnificent hall, with lofty roof and pointed windows, and a music-gallery at the further end, nearly two hundred feet distant. Charlie endeavoured to communicate to Mrs. Jenkins his belief that we had entered a church, but she could not understand his language, so she merely pointed out to his notice the glass drops of the great chandeliers, now shining in the sun with pretty prismatic colours, and still led us forward. We had as yet seen no one since we entered, but as we advanced into the hall, there came forward from the opposite end a black man, gaily dressed in loose robes of scarlet and blue, and wearing on his head a turban of white muslin. He showed

all his teeth in a grin of welcome as he drew near, his soft red slippers making no sound on the marble floor.

"Where is your mistress, Kubba?" asked Mrs. Jenkins of this odd figure.

"There," he answered, pointing to a door whence he had come just before. "Mistress say, come and bring piccaninny master, and piccaninny miss;" and again he grinned from ear to ear. Charlie looked a little alarmed, but he swallowed down his feelings and followed Kubba, holding fast by Mrs. Jenkins's hand, and glancing backwards now and then, to see that I was near. The black man threw wide the door, and we entered a large room, with a bay-window opening on a garden. At first I thought this room had been unoccupied, but presently there rose from the depths of an arm-chair and came towards us, the smallest woman I have ever seen. A pair of keen dark eyes shone out beneath thick eyebrows, as white as snow, and short curls of white hair peeped from beneath her peculiar head-gear. Her whole dress was black, and her countenance almost stern, as she came forward with eager gestures; but when her glance fell on Charlie, her lips relaxed into a smile, and holding out two small white hands covered with rings, she threw herself on her knees, on the floor, exclaiming in a sweet, though agitated voice, "Your

name must be Charlie, little boy! Surely your name is Charlie Grantham!"

"Tarlie," repeated the little boy; "Tarlie Grantham!" and moved by some playful impulse, he clasped his arms round the strange lady's neck, and laid his cheek on hers. In a moment her arms were round him; she pressed him to her heart, covering his face with her kisses, while tears poured down her own cheeks, and she seemed unable to speak from violent emotion. Charlie grew impatient of her fondness, and struggled to free himself from her caresses, so she presently released him, and rose once more to her feet.

"By the way, is there not a girl, too?" she asked, turning to Mrs. Jenkins, behind whose skirts I was almost hidden.

"Oh yes, ma'am, here she is. Come forward, Miss Clarissa, and speak to Miss Bletworth," and Mrs. Jenkins gave me a gentle push as she spoke. Very different was the look Miss Bletworth bestowed on me from the tender glance with which she had greeted Charlie, and I stood cowering and shy, wishing the floor would open, and swallow me up out of sight. It seemed as if the pale wrinkled face reddened with displeasure, and Mrs. Jenkins seized the opportunity to say, "I thought you'd see it, ma'am. It's as strong a likeness as the

other. Who could ever think they were brother and sister?"

There was unmistakeable anger in the face now, but it was not directed towards me.

"You forget yourself, Jenkins," Miss Bletworth observed, in a cold tone, that made the hearer wince. "You forget you are speaking of Miss Grantham. I beg that you will be guilty of no such forgetfulness for the future. You can go now and see that all the arrangements are complete in the bedrooms."

Jenkins departed without a word of reply, and Miss Bletworth again turned to me, and with some appearance of effort took my hand, and drew me down beside her on a sofa.

"Are you tired," she said, "or do you always look so white? Have you been ill lately?"

I tried to answer with composure, but my voice broke down into sobs in spite of me, and Charlie, who had been admiring the ornaments scattered about the room, came running to ask if I was naughty, and to kiss me, and bid me stop crying. Just at the same moment, refreshments were brought in, and after I had taken some food, I was better able to sustain my part, and reply to Miss Bletworth's questions. This was the easier to me, because she asked little of my life in England, but seemed eager to know all I could remember of the old

days in India. I had to describe the old barn-like house at Colaba, and our later and better home at Malabar Hill; and to tell all I knew of my father's present journey into Thibet. No detail in which he was concerned seemed too trivial to interest this stranger. She looked tenderly, from time to time, at Charlie, who had dropped asleep on the floor; otherwise, she remained quite still, with clasped hands, urging me to tell her more and yet more of the days that were past.

The musical-clock on the chimney-piece had just chimed seven, when Kubba came into the room to tell Miss Bletworth that dinner was served. The noise of the door awakened Charlie, who came towards us, blinking and wondering where he was, and glad, among all these strange surroundings, to see my familiar form.

"I had forgotten the time," said Miss Bletworth, rising; "would you like any more dinner, Clarissa, or shall I take you to your room, and show you Charlie's nursery?"

"I am very tired, thank you," I said; "I should like to go to bed, if I might."

"Follow me, then," she continued, taking Charlie's hand and moving towards the door, while I rose to obey; but as I crossed the room, walls, and floor, and ceiling, all seemed to waver and tremble, and I cried out that I was falling. I was aware that Kubba caught me and

laid me on a couch, and then, through a noise like that of rushing water, I heard Miss Bletworth's voice desiring Kubba to call the nurse. In a dreamy state, and still with the same rushing sound in my head, I heard footsteps about me, and felt my forehead bathed with something pleasant and cool; then I was lifted by a pair of strong arms, and a hearty voice said, "Poor little thing! she's been overdone with her journey. I'll undress her and put her to bed, ma'am, and perhaps she'll be all well in the morning."

I just knew that kind hands undressed me and laid me in a soft bed, and after that I knew no more for several days, for I was not well the next morning, as the nurse had hoped, but very seriously ill. I had travelled too soon after my late trouble and weakness, and the fatigue had nearly cost me my life. For a long time I existed from day to day with only a confused notion that Charlie was safe and happy, and that I might lie still and rest; but at length I again began to awake to fuller life, and to notice what was going on around me. One evening I opened my eyes and looked curiously out. I found myself in a bed with white curtains, one of which was drawn to shade my eyes from the light. I put out my hand and held it back, and then I saw a woman whom I knew to be nurse, the same who had tended me in my recent illness, sitting

near the window, looking out at the sunset. The window was arched, and in the centre of it was a richly-tinted coat-of-arms. The brightness dazzled me, and I dropped the curtain again, but not before I had noticed that the sloping rays of light passing through the tinted glass flung stains of gay colour on my coverlet. It was very pretty, but it seemed to me as if I had seen the same thing before somewhere,—perhaps in a dream. This little effort of thought tired me, and I fell asleep again; but after this time the mists gradually cleared from my mind, and my strength returned slowly, but surely. Charlie came often to see me, bright and cheerful, and talking much of Miss Bletworth, who had taught him to call her “Aunty.” He had forgotten why he wore his black frock, and my attempts to remind him of my mother, or of poor Mrs. Armstrong, were usually interrupted by his playfulness. I was vexed at this, and said aloud one day as he ran out of the room, “Oh, Charlie, Charlie, how can you forget so soon!” Nurse, who was sitting in her usual place by the window, heard what I said, and saw me turn my face to the wall, so she laid down her work and came near. She was a kind, good woman, and I felt she was more my friend than any body in the house.

“Don’t you be downhearted about him, Miss Clarissa,” she said, sitting down on the bed, and kindly

taking my hand. "He's too young to go on grieving. You mustn't mind his forgetting. Miss Bletworth makes a great pet of him, and it's very natural he should be merry and thoughtless, for he's but a baby after all."

"Yes, I know all that, nurse," I answered, sighing, "but I've nobody to speak to about mamma."

"Poor little dear!" she said, stooping down to kiss me; "if you wouldn't mind talking to me, it might ease your heart;" so she led me on to speak on the subject most often in my thoughts, and the relief was great indeed. I seldom saw Miss Bletworth, and when she did visit me, her manner, though kinder than at first, was constrained, and made me nervous and awkward. She brought me books and fruit, and always offered to get me any thing I might want; yet I could not overcome my awe of her presence, and was always thankful when she left the room.

It was early autumn when I left my bed and was laid on a couch by the window, whence I could look down on the blue lake, and watch the swans sailing from bank to bank. Beyond the lake were the grassy slopes of the park, over which many a time I saw Miss Bletworth tread, with Charlie bounding like an active sprite at her side. By and by, on sunny days, I was taken out of doors, Miss Bletworth herself driving me in a low pony-chaise. The doctors, however, dreaded

the winter for me, and after October set in with cold winds, I was kept entirely in the house: not, however, in my own room, though as yet I liked best to be there. I could go into the room where we had been received on our arrival, or into the great hall; though for some time the dread of meeting Kubba made me careful not to go to the latter place alone. I could not always understand the African's speech, and I was afraid he might be offended with me.

By degrees, as time wore on, my position improved. Miss Bletworth seemed to have overcome the repugnance she had shown for me at first, and endeavoured to encourage and make me happy. I have often thought the nurse must have assisted in producing this change, in which she rejoiced as much as I did. I was questioned now not only of our life in India, but of those later days at Shrimpton, and I sometimes saw my answers produce much agitation in my hearer. All this time there was no news of my father. I wrote to him to the care of his employers at Bombay, but the months rolled on, and no answer came.

One day I was sitting beside Miss Bletworth, busy with some pretty fancy-work she had given me, and talking with her, as usual, of my past life, and especially of Charlie's birth, and my joy at hearing of it.

"Dear Charlie!" she said, glancing fondly at him

as he played with his bricks on the floor; "of course he was called Charlie after your father?"

"Papa's name is Charles Ernest Grantham," I replied, "but I never heard any one call him Charlie. My dear mamma always called him Ernest. Charlie is called Charles Godfrey, because Mr. Collier was named Godfrey." After a pause, Miss Bletworth continued:

"Why did they call you Clarissa?"

"I have heard papa say it was an old family name among the Granthams," I answered; "but I have another name too, as well as Charlie. I am called Clarissa Almeria."

"Almeria!" she repeated, "why were you called by such an outlandish name?"

"I never knew," I replied, remembering how often my father had evaded the question. "I often asked papa, because he used to tell me a story when I was a very little girl about a fairy named Almeria, living in a fine castle; and I asked him if I was named after her; but he always said, 'That is not in the story, Clary.'" I paused, for Miss Bletworth had risen and gone to the window, where the string of the blind seemed to give her occupation for some time. At length she returned to her seat beside me, and continued: "What were we talking about? Oh! the story of the fairy Almeria. Tell me all about it,

Clarissa." I told it to her, interrupted several times by her rising to settle the blind again. At the close, after a short silence, she said abruptly,

"Do you know my name, Clarissa?"

No, I had only heard her called Miss Bletworth. She again went to the window: returning thence, she stood before me with her back to the light, her small figure erect, her finger raised, her eyes fixed keenly on mine.

"My name is Almeria," she said; and then suddenly turned away and left the room. I thought she looked very like a fairy herself, as she flitted through the great door; but I did not guess the whole truth till later.

The doctors had forbidden lessons for me for some months to come, so my time was very much at my own disposal, and sometimes, I confess, it hung somewhat heavily on my hands, especially during the long hours which Miss Bletworth and her constant companion, Charlie, spent in the open air, even after the winter had set in. I had learnt my way to a long gallery on the southern side of the house, and here I took daily exercise. It was the place I liked best for the purpose, because there were a great many pictures on the walls, and these amused me more than the wintry aspect of the landscape outside. I still knew so little of Miss Bletworth and her history, that I could not conjecture

what was her connexion with the stiff old faded portraits that hung here and there among pictures of brighter colouring and gayer subject. One day she found me standing before the representation of a lady in the costume of a shepherdess, with a crook in one hand, and the other laid on the head of a lamb. I had not heard her come in, and started violently as she touched me.

"I startled you, child," she said; "what was it that absorbed you so completely? Ah! were you wondering whether that mild giantess was an ancestress of mine? No, Clarissa, I had no ancestry. I suppose I had some grandfathers, but I never heard of them. My father was a poor weaver when I was a child like you, but he made some happy invention—that was a great success, and we all became rich people. My poor homely mother never learnt to look happy in her fine clothes, and was for ever in danger of calling her smart house-keeper 'Ma'am.' However, she did not live to enjoy her grandeur long, poor soul! and it was I who made my father buy this fine place. The late owners could tell you the history of their family from the twelfth century, but nevertheless, they were ruined by their own extravagance, and glad to sell my father every thing, even their family pictures. Frightful things they are, but I have never liked to take them

down. They almost seem to have a better right here than I."

She walked away as she spoke; indeed, she had rather been thinking aloud than talking to me, and she probably, before she finished, had forgotten I was near. I continued for awhile on the same spot, wondering again, as I had often wondered before, what was the connexion between this strange old lady and ourselves.

As the sweet spring days came on, I was allowed once more to breathe the open air, and for the first time thoroughly to enjoy the beauty of that happy season, as the fine old woods came into leaf and the primroses opened their unnumbered blossoms. At Shrimpton there had been but a few stunted shrubs and scanty patches of fir; here was untold wealth of beauty. The singing of the larks above the green cornfields, the piping of blackbird and thrush on the lawns, and the notes of the cuckoo in every grove, brought me much delight, though sometimes mixed with a vain yearning for the dear face I should see no more. Charlie was gay as all the other young things, and grew robust and sturdy, with bright curls waving round his bonny sun-burnt face. I was now often the companion of his rambles with Miss Bletworth, who treated me with increasing kindness, so that I was far happier

than at first. With her we went to the pretty little church at Daleford, so different from the ugly structures I had seen in India, with its Norman arches and stained windows, and the ivy that grew to the very top of its tower. Sometimes we went long drives among the hills, Miss Bletworth guiding her spirited horses well and fearlessly. Meantime, she bade me prepare to resume my lessons, as she was seeking a governess for me; and I read as much as I could, at stray times, that I might not seem very ignorant whenever this alarming newcomer should appear.

Sometimes, when Miss Bletworth was occupied with the guests who occasionally stayed at the house, Charlie and I walked out with nurse. On these occasions we usually went into the village, which would have been agreeable enough but for one reason. In a cottage standing in a weed-grown garden on one side of the street, lived an old woman known by the name of "Mad Betty," a squalid, miserable-looking creature, who was almost always at her door, if not at the gate of her domain, nodding and grinning at the passers-by. I was very much alarmed at sight of this unhappy being, and on one occasion, to my dismay, nurse suddenly left me with Charlie close to mad Betty's cottage, while she herself went to speak to a friend who lived near. Betty soon perceived us, and came from her door to the gate

with a dancing step, nodding and smiling, and making signs to us with her hands.

"Ah!" she cried, as she paused and leant her shrivelled arms on the gate-post, "I declare it's the fine young lady and gentleman from Yeldham! And how's the grand lady at Yeldham, the proud pie in peacock's feathers? Hasn't she got tired of her new toys yet? Take care, my fine young lady and gentleman! Don't offend the grand lady, or she'll be for turning you out-of-doors, as she turned your father out, years and years ago!" and Betty threw her head back, and laughed a long and discordant laugh that filled me with terror. Happily nurse returned at the moment, and I dragged Charlie towards her. He was rather amused than alarmed, and wanted to remain. "What does she say, nurse?" he asked. "Don't go away; she's a funny old woman."

But I urged nurse on, and she took us homewards.

"What did mad Betty say to you, Miss Clariissa?" she inquired, when we were out of hearing.

I did not like to tell her. I had always felt it would not be right to ask either nurse or Jenkins about any of the things I yet longed to know, and now I did not like to repeat the old woman's words about my father, glad as I should have been to know their meaning; so nurse was obliged to be satisfied with Charlie's assurance

that "the funny old Betty had called Clary a peacock."

A little while after this occurrence, I was one day alone in the library, where I had free access to a certain number of shelves, and, groping for some books that had fallen behind the rest, I drew forth a volume that attracted me by its title, for it was the narrative of the "Travels of Rolando," which had furnished my father with many of the stories he used to tell me on the rocks at Colaba, and in the garden on Malabar Hill. I carefully wiped away the dust, took a cushion into a shady nook by the window, and prepared myself for an hour's enjoyment. To my amazement, when I raised the cover of the book, the following inscription met my eye, "Charlie E. Grantham, from his loving sister, Almeria," and a date of nearly thirty years ago. Rolando may have seen wonders, but he could never have been more astonished than I was at this time. What could it mean? How could this white-haired lady, who seemed to me so very, very old, be the sister of my father, whose age I knew to be thirty-five? Then the name was different, and she had never spoken to me of the fact at all, never mentioned her relationship with my father in any way. The hour I had intended to spend in reading, was passed in vain conjectures, and then I took the precious book to my room

and laid it among my treasures, hoping that time would solve the mystery for me.

That evening Miss Bletworth had a dinner-party, and Charlie and I were dressed in our best black frocks, and taken down to see the guests when they arrived. The curiosity I had been feeling all day was further stimulated by a remark I overheard one gentleman make to his wife, when she mentioned our name :

" Well ! " he said, " Charlie Grantham's children, are they ? I never expected to see *them* here. "

At night I felt restless and disinclined for sleep, so I begged nurse to leave the blinds open, that I might see the moonlight. As I watched the soft reds and purples of the stained glass creep along the wall till they fell on my bed, I felt as if I were living over again some old, long-past hours. I seemed to know what would happen next ; and I felt no surprise, when, after I had lain pondering for hours on the day's puzzles, and the carriages of Miss Bletworth's guests had rolled away down the hill, the door of my room was softly opened, and a small figure glided to the bedside, and arranged my bedclothes with its small white hands. I saw all with half-shut eyes, not caring to move or speak ; and before the door was again closed, I heard a deep sigh. I lay listening, and presently a full sound of music rose pealing through the house. I knew it must come from

the organ in the music-gallery above the hall, and a great longing came over me to go and see who was playing. In a moment I was up, had thrown a shawl about me, and was stealing, with bare feet, to a passage whence I could see into the hall. Long bars of moon-light lay across the marble floor, with deep shadows between; the gallery was lighted by two lamps near the organ, where stood the same little figure I had lately seen at my bedside. The small white hands were pressing out glorious sounds that went echoing up into the arched roof, and stirred my heart with feelings I could hardly control. I went back to my room and sat down on the bed. That music had told me strange things. Here was the fairy Almeria herself; here was the room whence the boy she loved had stolen forth to listen to the organ, and that boy was my own father. All this was plain enough now. I understood that there had been some great quarrel between this lady and my father, but I dared ask no questions; and meantime, no news came to me from the East, no letter from either my father or Mrs. Collier, and my heart grew heavy as I wondered whether I should ever see either of them again.

Miss Bletworth kept her word. One day I heard her voice calling me on the stairs, and when I ran to ask what she wanted, she said,

"Come with me to the drawing-room. Your governess has arrived."

I followed, trembling and shy, hardly daring to lift my eyes from the ground when I came into the presence of the dreaded stranger; but when I did look up to reply to her greeting, I beheld nothing very terrible. My governess was a young lady with a sweet fair face, and a cheerful, pleasant voice. We were friends at once, and Miss Bletworth looked pleased. She took us to the room that was to be our study, and laying her hand on the young lady's arm before leaving us together, she said, "I thought one old woman was enough in a house, so I chose you, my dear, to be a companion to this child. She wants cheering, for she has not been so happy here as she might have been; but all will be well now you are come."

My new friend, who told me her name was Minna Douglas, spoke warmly of many kindnesses received by her family from Miss Bletworth, and seemed pleased to live under that lady's roof. She was a clever and accomplished girl, and we were happy together in our busy mornings in the study, and in our afternoon rambles. I could talk to her of those I loved, and she in return told me of her home, and her brothers and sisters, and all the home-circle she was to meet at Christmas. She shared my admiration for Charlie,

and was as ready to spoil him as Miss Bletworth herself. I blessed the day she had come to Yeldham.

One of our amusements in the Autumn was sketching from nature, in which Miss Douglas excelled, and her enthusiasm infected me. We went one afternoon in September to Daleford, to make a drawing of the pretty Norman church. My attempt was soon finished, but Miss Douglas's elaborate sketch required more time, so while I waited for her, I strolled about the churchyard and read the inscriptions on the grave-stones. In doing so, I wandered on to a corner I had never before visited, where, sheltered by an old oak, there lay a grave with a cross engraved on its flat surface, and an inscription round it in old English letters. I paused to decipher these, and found, to my surprise, a name that was familiar, "Everard Clay," with a date, and then the words, "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord." How it brought back to me the old days, when I was a little child! I ran full of excitement, to tell Miss Douglas of my discovery, and she was very sympathizing. She laid aside her drawing, and came with me to sit in the shadow of the old oak, encouraging me to recall my recollections of the past. I wondered I had not felt before that this Daleford must be the village where my dear friend had dwelt. There was the rectory on the hill-side, where she had

lived happily with her brother; there was the school where she had daily taught her little scholars. I could not remember that she had mentioned the name of the village; but Yeldham, surely Yeldham had not seemed a strange name to me when I first heard it from Mrs. Jenkins? I remembered now. It was at Yeldham that the great party had taken place, the New Year's party Mrs. Collier had described to me; and the person who played the solemn music as the Old Year went down the hall, must have been Miss Bletworth. The excitement of this new discovery was succeeded by a reaction very hard to bear, but my bright companion suggested all sorts of cheering thoughts. She was sure I should soon hear again from my father; of course he could not write from Thibet. Did I suppose that there were post-offices in the Thibetian villages? He would return successful from his mission, and I should soon get a letter; she had not a doubt on the subject. As to Mrs. Collier, she was on her voyage either to India or, who could tell? to England, perhaps. How could she write if she were on the sea? But I should soon know all about it, she was quite sure. With words like these, Miss Douglas tried to restore my spirits; and when she had partially succeeded, she changed the subject to one she knew I liked, and we talked of her home, till I grew interested, and asked questions about

her brothers and sisters, as usual. She too had a younger brother, Charlie.

"Do you know, Clarissa," she said, "I pay for Charlie's schooling myself, out of the salary Miss Bletworth gives me. I am more proud of that than of any thing in the world! My father would not have accepted such a favour unless I had done something for it; for, you know, we have no right to any help from Miss Bletworth; so this plan of my being your governess is the most delightful one that ever was thought of."

"How did you know Miss Bletworth?" I asked.

"Oh! it's a very old story," she replied. "My grandfather was a clerk to old Mr. Bletworth for a great many years, and that made a sort of tie which Miss Bletworth has always been the first to recognize. When the business was sold, and the family came to Yeldham, Mr. Bletworth gave my grandfather a pension, which has been continued to my father to this day, but we are a large family, and we must work. I have often heard my father talk of Yeldham. He used to come when he was a boy, before the first Mrs. Bletworth died. She was very fond of him, but she died soon after they moved hither, and he never saw the second Mrs. Bletworth."

"Was there a second Mrs. Bletworth?" I asked.

"Oh yes," she replied carelessly. "Mr. Bletworth married when he was quite old, and his new wife was a young widow, named Grantham, with one little boy."

"Grantham!" I repeated, a new light breaking upon me at the words I had just heard.

"Oh! I ought not to have said any thing about it, I daresay," exclaimed Miss Douglas, growing very red. "I was not thinking, Clary. Don't ask me any questions, for I don't know whether I ought to answer them. How could I be so foolish!"

So I was obliged to be content with my guesses, which were tolerably correct; and little by little, I scarcely know how, the rest of the story became known to me: how the young Mrs. Bletworth had died very soon after her marriage, and Mr. Bletworth had not survived her long, but left his daughter in possession of Yeldham, and the large fortune the old weaver had accumulated. Then, how the young Mrs. Bletworth's son, Charlie Grantham, had been adopted as a brother by Miss Bletworth, and all through his childhood and early youth had been the joy of her heart; till by some assertion of independence, he had mortally offended her, and gone away no one knew whither. I fancied the cause of quarrel must have been in some way connected with my mother, but how one so unalterably

gentle and good, could, ever so remotely, have been a source of strife, I could not conjecture.

We usually spent our evenings at this time in the drawing-room; when Miss Bletworth was alone, and after Charlie was gone to bed, Miss Douglas used to be made to sing, which she did very sweetly; and then Miss Bletworth would often play to us on a smaller organ which was in this room. In the evening of the day of which I have been speaking, Miss Bletworth was unusually gracious to me, but I could not summon courage to speak to her, till, in a pause of her beautiful music, Miss Douglas said,

“Clarissa has not told you of an interesting discovery she made to-day.”

“A discovery!” Miss Bletworth repeated sharply, as she turned her bright eyes on me. “What discovery do you fancy you have made, child?”

“It was about Miss Clay, Mrs. Collier I mean,” I answered, trembling. “I found out she used to live at Daleford. I saw where her brother was buried in the churchyard.”

“Miss Clay? What, Anne Clay? Was the Mrs. Collier you talk about, our Anne Clay, whose brother was Rector of Daleford?”

I took courage now, and told my story, to which she listened with interest

"Only think of your knowing her!" she said, when I paused. "I liked Anne Clay; she was a good, simple, clever girl. And she knew your parents, you say, Clarissa?"

"Oh yes," I said; "papa had been at college with her brother, and that made her kind to us at first; but afterwards" and I paused in some fear.

"Afterwards what, child? Why don't you go on?"

"Afterwards, she was kind because she loved mamma so dearly. She made me promise always to be good to mamma and never to vex her; and she said mamma was better and wiser than any body she had ever known, and that I never, never could know any body so good as my own mamma. She said I must help her all I could, and never grieve her; and oh! I did try, indeed I did!"

I hid my face in my hands, and sobbed for some moments quite uncontrollably: then I felt the touch of a hand on my head, and looking up, I saw that I was alone with Miss Douglas, so I nestled into her arms and was comforted.



CHAPTER XIV.

NEWS FROM AFAR.

THE latest yellow leaves were fluttering down from the autumnal woods, and still I heard nothing of my father. His latest letters were now eighteen months old, and even Miss Douglas's sanguine spirit confessed there was cause for anxiety, though good reason also for hope. She tried to keep alive an interest in my pursuits, and to make me share her love for drawing, showing me how to colour the sketches I had made during the summer. I was busied on one of these (a view of Daleford Church) one afternoon in November, when some question arose as to the shape of a window or the position of a buttress, and Miss Douglas proposed that, the weather being fine, we should put on our warm cloaks, and at once proceed to the scene itself, and settle the matter by personal observation. I was strong

enough for such expeditions now, even in cold weather, and we were soon crossing the park with rapid steps, enjoying the sharp air. As we stood still to observe the object for whose sake we had come, we heard voices near us, and presently perceived a lady and gentleman standing in the remote corner, where, under the old oak, lay the grave of Everard Clay. While Miss Douglas made a hasty note in her memorandum-book, I idly watched the pair, whose backs were towards me, and wondered whence they came.

"How very tall that lady is!" I observed to my companion. "I don't think I ever saw so tall a woman except one, and that was my dear Mrs. Collier. Where can those people come from? I'm sure we never saw them here before."

As I ceased to speak, and as Miss Douglas put up her memorandum-book, the pair I was watching turned and moved up the path towards us. The lady's veil was thrown back, but she held her handkerchief to her eyes, so that her features were hidden; but there was something in the manner of walking, and in the ripples of the golden hair, that made my heart beat as if it would suffocate me. I could not take my eyes from the figure advancing nearer and nearer, though Miss Douglas touched me, and whispered that we had better go out of the way. I even pushed her im-

patiently aside and stood still, right in the centre of the path, so that when the lady took her handkerchief from her eyes, we met face to face. I knew her at once, and stretched out my arms with a loud cry of joy. She took my hands in hers, and looked at me eagerly. "Is it you, really?" she said. "Is this tall girl with rosy cheeks my little Clary? Oh child, child! how glad I am to see you again!" and then she kissed me fondly and repeatedly. I laughed and cried by turns, and could not utter a word. I had found my first friend again, my dear Mrs. Collier; and that great happiness swallowed up every thought for the time, and was as much as I could bear.

"And pray, Clary, don't you mean to take any notice of me?" asked another familiar voice, the sound of which carried me back to the old days that now seemed so long, long past. "Surely I may claim to be an old friend too?"

"Oh yes!" I cried, giving my hand to Mr. Collier, and at last finding words; "I am so glad, so very glad, that I don't know what to do. I wish I could tell you how glad I am!"

"I was coming to you, Clary," said Mrs. Collier, "and only paused here for a reason you know. I have had some trouble to find you. We only came to England last week, and we went to Shrimpton to ask your

address, but your old landlady had forgotten it, and Mr. Walcot was away. However, we advertised for Mrs. Armstrong, and she told us where to look for you. We will walk back to Yeldham with you, and see Miss Bletworth and Charlie, and I want to carry off you and Charlie to stay with me in London for a little while."

Miss Douglas had considerably slipped away, and was already far on her road before us, so I walked on between my newly-found friends in a dreamy state of bliss, which was only interrupted by the recurrence of one of my constant anxieties.

"About papa," I said, stopping short, and looking from one to the other; "do you know any thing about papa? I have never heard, all this long time. Do you know if he is safe?"

They looked at each other, and then Mrs. Collier replied; "We know he is safe, Clary, and that you will hear from him very soon, and that is all we can tell you now. Set your heart at rest, dear. He is quite well. He will like to tell you himself all that he has done."

"Himself? Is he coming too?" I cried.

"I hope so, Clary, very soon. But tell me about yourself. Are you happy at Yeldham? Are they kind to you there?"

"Yes, they are kind now," I said. "I was not happy at first, but Miss Bletworth does not seem to

dislike me now, and Miss Douglas is, oh! so good to me!" and I went on to tell all I could think of about myself and Charlie. I told them how lately I had discovered that Daleford was the place that had been Mrs. Collier's happy home, though the very first sight of the village had reminded me of her, and I now laughed merrily at my stupidity in not having recognized it immediately.

"Have you made any other discoveries at Yeldham?" inquired Mrs. Collier.

"Oh yes, many—a great many; but I want to know more, if I may. I found out about papa a long time ago, and I think," I added, hesitating, "I think I know why Miss Bletworth did not like me at first. It was because of my likeness to my dear mamma."

"You have never forgotten the promise you made me at Alexandria, Clary?" said Mrs. Collier, hastily.

"Oh no, never for a moment," I said, my cheeks flushing, and tears coming into my eyes. "Nobody has tried to make me forget, and I told Miss Bletworth about it a little while ago, when we were talking about you."

"That is well, Clary," she said, squeezing the hand she held; "you will know every thing in good time. Meanwhile, don't you want to hear about my children?"

"Do tell me! pray tell me about them," I cried; and

then she described her two little girls, (who, to my delight, were called Anne Lucy, and Clarissa,) and her boy, who was the youngest of the three, and almost the largest already. In such conversation the time passed so quickly, that we arrived only too soon at the house. We paused on the terrace to look over the park with its now leafless woods, and the lake, across whose grey waters a solitary swan was sailing, and then we rang the bell at the great door. Miss Douglas had given notice of our approach, and when Kubba ushered us into the outer hall, we saw, framed in the doorway of the great hall, the small figure of Miss Bletworth, who received my friends with a stately grace that would have befitted the fairy-princess of such a palace.

"Mrs. Collier is as dearly welcome to Yeldham as Anne Clay ever was of old," she said, extending both her little hands to grasp Mrs. Collier's, while the latter bent to receive the proffered kiss of welcome. Mr. Collier was introduced and greeted with cordiality, and we all moved towards the drawing-room, preceded by Kubba grinning with satisfaction. Miss Bletworth insisted on sending to the inn for the luggage, and giving my friends accommodation at Yeldham. Mrs. Collier explained that they could only stay till the next morning, and wished to take Charlie and me back with them to London, and this was soon settled. We had not

been long in the drawing-room when Charlie made his appearance, and was duly noticed and admired. A shade rather of sadness than of displeasure came over Miss Bletworth's face, when she saw his ecstasy at the idea of going to London ; but she only sighed, and made no remark.

I could hardly believe, when I woke the next morning, that I was under the same roof with Mrs. Collier, and that I had not dreamt on the previous night of her dear face bending once more over my bed. But it was no dream. There was nurse already in my room, packing my clothes and Charlie's into a large box, ready for our journey to London.

There was one thought to chasten my joy. There was one dear face that would never come back ; but the recollection of it was without bitterness, solemn and sweet, rather than gloomy or sad.

Miss Bletworth came to the great door to see us depart, in spite of the grey fog that made every thing damp and chilly. I saw her fold Charlie in a long, clinging embrace, from which he struggled to free himself, and she let him go, and looked after him with a sad, wistful smile, that made me feel sorry for her, and emboldened me to go near and wish her good-bye. She started as I spoke, turned towards me and took my hand not unkindly. " Good-bye, Clarissa," she said ; " you are glad

to go too, and no wonder! An old woman's house is a dull home for young things, and they will run away whenever they can."

"No," I answered steadily, "please don't say that. Charlie is a very little boy and he likes a change. He does not understand about parting. And I knew Mrs. Collier when I was a little child."

"Yes, I know," interrupted Miss Bletworth, "and you loved her then, and have loved her ever since. That is the way with girls and women, Clarissa; they don't forget. It is not the way with boys and men. Don't you see you made a bad defence, and had better let it alone?"

I feared she was angry, but she drew me nearer to her, and kissed me for the first time in my life.

"You are a good child, and I am getting to like you, I believe," she said, "but you needn't mind about loving me. Love those that have been kind to you."

She turned away so hastily that I could say no more, and in a few minutes we were gone. I made Charlie kiss his hand and wave his handkerchief as long as we were in sight of the house, but there was no grief in his farewells, only the maddest mirth, which lasted most part of the journey. It was only our second experience of the railroad, and we were naturally excited by the

speed, and half sorry when we stopped at Waterloo station.

We were to pass a week in London, the day of our return to Yeldham having been named by Miss Bletworth. I passed my mornings with Mrs. Collier, and had time to put to her many of the questions I had longed to ask. She told me my father's marriage had offended Miss Bletworth, because she had wished him to make a different choice, and because my mother was a portionless orphan; and she repeated all the loving praise she had formerly bestowed on my mother. She said she had written from Bombay to inform Miss Bletworth of her meeting us there, but her letters were never noticed. Nothing seemed to have any effect but the letters written with my mother's dying hand, and on receiving those, Miss Bletworth had at once given us a home.

"She is a generous woman, Clary, and has a great dread of being unjust; but her temper is warm and her prejudices are strong. I cannot help thinking that, in her heart, she bitterly regrets the past, and loves your father dearly still. We shall see what changes time will bring."

It was good news to me that the Colliers were to remain in England for the future, and never to return to Bombay. The death of an uncle had put Mr. Collier

in possession of an estate in Hampshire, and a fortune that made it unnecessary for him to pursue his profession, or risk his health further in the climate of India.

We had several days of sight-seeing, in spite of the unfavourable time of year, and the short, dark afternoons. Charlie went with us to the British Museum, to see the stuffed beasts and birds; but we usually left him with the little Colliers in the nursery, where he reigned a king, with good-humoured but absolute sway. One unusually fine morning was selected for a trip to Greenwich, to see the hospital, with its painted hall, and carved chapel, and wards full of cabins for the old sailors. We were very well amused for some time, but were just thinking of departure, when my attention was caught by the voice of an old pensioner who was talking to two youths, visitors like ourselves. The old man was half hidden by a pillar of the colonnade through which we were at the moment passing; but I saw the faces of his hearers, with gaping mouths and distended eyes, as they gave eager attention to his tale.

"Never heerd on it, hav'n't ye?" he said, with some contempt. "Why, where have you lived, I should like to know, never to hear of that? Why, there's not a critter on the earth, but has its counterpart in the sea.

I dare say you never heard tell of sea-cows; but I've seen a plenty of 'em. How should the fish-people get milk else? But this horse I was telling ye about, comes up out of the sea at Labrador, and goes and feeds on shore, for all the world like a land-horse."

"You don't say so! It's very wonderful!" exclaimed the listeners; and at the same moment I went forward a little, that I might see the speaker. There was no possibility of mistaking the red face with its one eye and its puckered mouth, or the silent laugh which shook the old pensioner's whole frame. It was Tom Stubbs himself.

"Oh, Tom, Tom, what are you talking about?" I exclaimed, touching his arm.

He brought his eye to bear upon me at once, and then cried; "Why, missy, little missy, sure it's never you!"

"Yes it is though, Tom," I replied, laughing, as I shook his hard old hand.

"Well now, don't it do my eyes,—leastways my eye,—good to see you again, missy! I never knew where you'd gone, or I'd have come to see you once more. I met Mrs. Armstrong once, and she told me about the dear lady, and I didn't wonder to hear it, missy. The likes of her don't stay long out of heaven. But I was so struck-like, that I clean forgot to ask your address."

"I am so glad you knew me again, Tom," I said.

"La, missy, I warn't likely to forget your little face, and it has just the same look about it, except for being fuller and rosier. Sarvant, ma'am," he continued, as he caught sight of Mrs. Collier. "It seems nateral and right to see you and missy side by side; and you too, Mr. Collier, welcome to Greenwich, sir."

"What were you saying to those men just now, Tom?" I asked. "I'm afraid you were taking them in shamefully. Oh, fie, Tom!"

He shook again with his quiet laugh. "I don't say it's quite right and proper, missy," he replied, "but them poor landsmen are so ignorant, it's quite a temptation to put off a traveller's tale upon 'em. They'd believe a'most any thing. They open their mouths so wide, I can't help giving them a tough morsel to swallow now and then;" and again Tom laughed, low and long. He then told us that, as he had served in the navy long enough to have a claim for admission into the hospital, one of his old captains had put him in the way of getting in. He liked it well enough, only he had nothing to do, and he had never been used to an idle life before. He had tried at first to be "houseman" to one of the officers, but he could not carry weights up the stairs, and he was obliged to leave. On the whole, he was pretty well satisfied.

We parted with many expressions of goodwill from all parties, and a promise of future meetings, and I felt all the happier for having seen my old friend once more.

I found that Mr. and Mrs. Collier had had no direct communication with my father, but had heard from a mutual friend at Bombay, of his return thither, and his intention of proceeding to England immediately. They had sent letters to meet him at Malta, giving him their London address, and urging him to come straight to them, as they hoped to be able to give him news of his children. All this Mrs. Collier told me cautiously, and I at once perceived the rest of her plan.

"This is the day for the Marseilles mail to come in," I cried, for I was very familiar with all the dates of arrivals from India.

"Don't be too sanguine, Clary," said Mrs. Collier kindly; "there may not have been time for him to wind up his affairs at Bombay, but at least we shall hear from him, I hope."

I was sure, however, that she did in her heart expect him, for she started at every unusual sound, and went very often to the window. In the afternoon she said to me with a smile, "It is of no use, Clary, for you and me to go on trying to be hypocrites! We are both

in a fidget, and we may as well acknowledge it outright. The carriage is coming; let us go to the bazaar and get Charlie's new top, and so pass away an anxious hour or two."

Charlie and little Lucy Collier went with us, and kept us full two hours, in their delight at the stalls of toys, and we drove home after dusk had fallen, and the street-lamps were lighted. I was half longing, half afraid to reach home, and a glance from Mrs. Collier told me she shared my feelings.

"A gentleman is waiting to see you, ma'am, in the drawing-room," said the butler, as we entered the house. "He desired me not to give his name."

Mrs. Collier sent Lucy to the nurse and took Charlie's hand. "Go before us, Clary," she said cheerfully. "Let us go and see this gentleman in the drawing-room."

I obeyed her mechanically, hearing my heart beat as I mounted step after step. As I opened the door, I saw a tall gentleman standing on the rug, paler, thinner, older by many years than the father I remembered; but the voice that exclaimed, "Clary, my darling!" was the same as of old, and I sprang forward, to be caught in my father's arms, and pressed fondly to his heart. One cannot describe meetings like these. Our joy was very subdued and quiet, for in

every heart but Charlie's was the sense of a loss, the yearning for

“The touch of a vanished hand
And the sound of a voice that was still.”

I need not dwell on the subject of my father's adventures during the interval that had elapsed since his last letter, for he gave to the world a “Journal of Travels in Thibet,” that was much read and praised, soon after his arrival in England. Suffice it to say that his absence would have been of far shorter duration had he not fallen ill of a bad fever, and been laid up for months at an obscure village, where the natives treated him with kindness and nursed him as well as they could. An European servant, who had been his companion, died of the same disease. Three times had my father endeavoured to resume his journey from this place, and three times had he been obliged to relinquish the attempt from excessive weakness; but he at length succeeded in returning, after many wanderings, to Bombay, having fully succeeded in his object. His success was deemed of so much importance to the interests of his employers, that he was made a partner in the firm, and sent to manage their affairs in England, his health requiring an immediate change of climate. But wealth and ease were almost valueless to him now, since

he received, at the same moment, the news of my mother's death.

"I knew you and the boy were safe in Almeria's Castle, Clary," he said to me, with a sad smile, "and I did not seem to care to live any longer."

"But you don't feel like that now, papa?"

"No, Clary, not now that I have seen your dear little face again. When will your leave be up? You must go back to Yeldham on the day named."

"The day after to-morrow, papa. Must we go?" I said anxiously. "Won't you come with us? I know Miss Bletworth loves you better than any body. Do come to Yeldham, papa!"

"No, Clary, I cannot go to Yeldham. I do not say so in anger, God knows. All enmity, if I had any, is buried out of sight for ever in that lowly grave at Shrimpton, beside which I stood this morning. Besides, has not Miss Bletworth given my children a home, and treated them like her own kith and kin? I am grateful to her, but I cannot go to Yeldham till she invites me thither. It is simply impossible, so don't look disappointed, little woman. I will go with you to Daleford, and as far as the gates of Yeldham, but no farther."

From such a decision there was no appeal, and the subject was mentioned no more. On the following day

I went with my father, house-hunting, and, after a fatiguing expedition, we returned successful, having found a pretty house in the Bayswater-road, with windows overlooking Kensington-gardens. It was well furnished and ready for immediate occupation, and as we walked back through Hyde-park to the Colliers' lodgings, in Green-street, we talked over our future *ménage*, and I rejoiced in the prospect of sharing a home with my father once more. I was old enough to appreciate the unselfish kindness with which he considered my taste and consulted my wishes, instead of dwelling on the grief that had overshadowed his own life. I felt capable of any sacrifice to make him happier, and to show him my gratitude and love.

"There is another matter to be considered, Clary," he said, after consultations on various subjects; "we shall want somebody to take care of us. You are rather too young to be a housekeeper yet, and I shall be at my office in the City all the day. Who is to see the larder filled, and keep the house in order?"

"Oh! do let us have Mrs. Armstrong!" I exclaimed.

"What! the terrible Armstrong, Clary," he said, smiling. "Since when has she become a favourite?"

"She was so good," I stammered, "so kind at Shrimpton—I shall never forget, papa—indeed, I love her very much now."

"I am very glad of it, Clary. I would not propose it, for fear of vexing you, but I should like to have her with us better than any body, and I think she will be willing to return to us."

The morning came for our return to Yeldham. When Charlie saw our boxes brought down to the hall, he expressed a determination to remain where he was, and could only be pacified by the assurance that my father was going to travel with us. Mrs. Collier took a tender leave of me; then, as she held my hand for a minute, added, "I am not going to trouble you with advice, Clary. Truth and openness are always best. Act as your heart and conscience dictate, and fear nothing, my child."

My father was silent and thoughtful during our journey, and I did my utmost to prevent Charlie disturbing him with questions. We had, perhaps designedly, travelled by so early a train, that the carriage from Yeldham had not been sent to Daleford to meet us, although it had been ordered, as I afterwards heard, to proceed thither at a later hour. My father helped us out of the railway-carriage, and called a fly, and in a few minutes we were moving along the road towards the village. We were all silent now, Charlie being occupied with a bag of sweet biscuits provided by Mrs. Collier, in case of emergency. My father's face was

pale and sad as he looked on scenery once so familiar, and I heard him sigh frequently, but I did not interrupt the current of his thoughts, painful as they evidently were.

"Now, Clary, good-bye," he said, when, after passing through Daleford village, the driver paused at the great gates of Yeldham-park. "Here we part for the present. I shall be at the inn at Daleford till to-morrow morning. God bless you, children."

The door of the fly was closed again after his exit, and we were passing through the gate, before Charlie had so far overcome his amazement, as to utter a wail of lamentation at my father's unexpected disappearance; and I was fully employed in soothing him till we reached the hall-door and were admitted by Kubba.

"Come soon!" the African exclaimed. "Mistress never think you come so soon."

As I led in the drooping Charlie, Miss Douglas came running to meet us.

"We expected you later," she said, as she kissed us, "and I was coming to meet you at the station. Come into the drawing-room at once to Miss Bletworth: she knows you have arrived."

Charlie ran on first, to tell his trouble and be petted into cheerfulness again, and as I followed with Miss Douglas, I saw that Miss Bletworth looked beyond us

with a yearning, impatient glance, as if expecting that some one more might be coming; then with a sigh of disappointment, greeted me not unkindly, though without much appearance of interest.

"You are come earlier than I expected you, Clarissa," she said. "Who brought you back?"

"Papa brought us," I replied; and she started from her seat, exclaiming, "Where is he? Is he here?"

"No," I replied, (and as I spoke she sank back on her chair;) "he only came to the gate with us. He is at Daleford, at the inn."

For the space of a minute she sat white and rigid; then she rose, walked with a steady step to the fireplace and rang the bell, fixing her eyes on the door, and tapping impatiently with her little foot until the servant came.

"The carriage immediately," she said, as Kubba opened the door; and when he stopped to ask which carriage she would have, her eyes flashed angrily as she answered, "No matter; only let it come at once."

Kubba's black face instantly vanished, and Miss Bletworth also left the room. In a very short time, the carriage that had been prepared to fetch us, was brought to the door, a small figure wrapped in furs entered it, and was wheeled rapidly away down the road

by which we had so lately come. I was glad that nurse carried off Charlie, and I could sit down quietly and take breath. Miss Douglas worked diligently at some embroidery, and wisely abstained from speech, so I had a little time for reflection. What was going to happen? was the old feud to be healed? was the fairy Almeria gone to speak words of peace?

I could hear my heart beat as I sat in the recess of the window, looking out on the road that wound away below the hill and beyond the lake, between the leafless woods. There was no other sound for a long time, save the click of Miss Douglas's needle, and the occasional crackle of a log that Kubba had lately thrown on the fire. Outside, the air was very still, and the sky unusually clear for November. By and by, when I had watched for a full hour, I heard a distant rumbling of wheels, then I saw the returning carriage sweep past the woods and begin to ascend the hill. In vain I tried to discover if there were more than one person within the vehicle; the windows in front were closed, and I was obliged to wait the event as patiently as I could. I shrank behind the curtain lest I should be observed, and so missed seeing whoever dismounted from the carriage; but presently there were steps on the stairs, and, as Miss Douglas glided away by a side entrance, the door from the hall was thrown open by Kubba, and

Miss Bletworth entered, leaning on the arm of my father. . Almost hidden by the drapery, I gazed, spell-bound, and saw my father, after leading his companion to a seat, look round him like one in a dream.

"Shall I wake presently, Almeria?" he said, with a faint smile. "I almost think I must be asleep. Or have all these past sorrowful years been a dream? Which is the reality?"

Perhaps while he spoke, she was thinking of the change that had passed over him since she had last seen him there. He had then been very young and gay: now he was prematurely aged, and altered by sorrow and anxiety. She rose and stretched her arms towards him, crying, "Forgive me, Charlie, forgive!"

He took her hands and kissed her wrinkled forehead, as he answered, "Don't speak of forgiveness, Almeria. I was wrong too. I have often repented—not," he added, hastily, "not for one moment of the act which first angered you."

"I know, I know," she interrupted; "I was cruel, unjust. Pity me, Charlie, for I can never make atonement. I knew her as she really was, too late, too late!"

"She never bore malice towards you," continued my father, "and you have been good to her children. Let the past be as if it had not been. She had but one

grief, and that was the knowledge of our estrangement. My pride would not let me seek a reconciliation while I was poor, and it is of this that I repent."

"And I can do nothing for you now," she said sadly; "nothing, with all my boasted wealth."

He shook his head with the sad smile now so habitual to him; "I want no wealth," he said; "I have enough. But you can love me and my children. You know not how glad I am that we are friends again."

At this point in the conversation I took courage to come forward.

"What, Clary, you there!" exclaimed my father. "Little eavesdropper, how came you to be hidden there, hearing our conversation?"

I knew he was not really angry, and I managed to explain that I had not had courage to interrupt the conversation earlier; and I think my father was glad to turn to new and less agitating topics. Soon afterwards, the sound of the great gong gave notice that dinner-time was near. We all dined together now, even Charlie, at four o'clock; and as no one had had leisure during this agitating morning, to think of the claims of hunger, we were not sorry to find the day so far advanced.

"Your room is ready for you, Charlie," said Miss Bletworth, rising, "and you will find Kubba attentive

and intelligent." She laid her hand on my father's arm and looked at him while she spoke, as if she could not bear to lose sight of him again, even for a moment.

"And who is Kubba?" he said, smiling. "Where did you pick up that princely African, who looks to perfection the character of porter to the fairy Almeria's enchanted palace?"

"Ah! don't laugh at me, Charlie! I saw a troop of boys and men tormenting a poor ragged black man, one day about three years ago, in Daleford Street. I was driving fast and came on them unawares . . .".

"Yes! I see it all," interrupted my father, laughing; "I see the pony-chaise transformed into a war-chariot, and the avenging goddess, a very Bellona, with flashing eyes and cutting words, making the pitiful crowd slink away like beaten hounds. I see it all, Almeria! Well, when the enemy had fled in confusion, and you stood face to face with the African prince, you offered him your alliance and friendship?"

"I brought him here in my carriage," she answered; "heard his story, and told him I would give him a fair trial as my servant. He has served me well and faithfully ever since. His story was simple enough. He came in a merchant-ship, working his passage from Sierra Leone, and fancying he should better himself by coming to England."

"He has fallen on his feet now," my father said. "The garments of blue and scarlet must be happiness enough for a savage."

"I am afraid," she replied, with a deprecating glance, "they were intended to punish Daleford, as much as to gratify Kubba!"

"The same Almeria still, I see!" said my father; and the words seemed to be spoken and received with equal pleasure.

There is little left for me to say, for after this memorable reconciliation, my life flowed on quietly enough, and the days of my childhood were passed for ever. Mrs. Armstrong joyfully returned to us, and took charge of the house in London, which I to this day call my home; sitting by patiently while I took lessons of different masters, and looking dignified in the gown of black silk she always wore. Her love for Charlie was always her strongest feeling; but she treated me with an affection and kindness of which I once scarcely believed her capable. The summer months Charlie and I always passed at Yeldham, my father joining us there almost daily, after his business was done. Miss Douglas, until she married the curate, remained with Miss Bletworth as companion, and added much to the happiness I enjoyed at Yeldham.

The Colliers have ever been our dearest friends,

and we have met often, both in London and in the country.

The first time I went to their pretty place in Hampshire, an agreeable surprise awaited me. From a seat in the trim garden of the porter's lodge, there rose and came forward to open the gate for us, the familiar figure of my old friend, Tom Stubbs. I called to the driver to stop, and leaned from the carriage-window to shake hands with the old man, who stood flushed and happy, with the wind blowing his white hair, and his one eye moist with feeling.

"Yes, missy," he said, "the good lady and gentleman up yonder have given me this home for love of you; and what with running to the gate, and pottering about among the flowers, and carving of little toys for them purty little dears at the house, I've plenty to do, and it suits me better than the place where you saw me last. I've cast anchor here for the rest o' my life, and thank God! missy, I shall see your dear face a-shining on me now and then. God bless you!"

Like an echo, I repeat old Tom's benison;
God bless you!

THE END.

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